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Birthing Salvation

Gender and Class in Early Christian Childbearing Discourse

By

Anna Rebecca Solevåg

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For Vidar, Torbjørn and Silje

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements xi
Abbreviations xiii

Introduction 1
What Does Salvation Have to Do with Childbearing? 1
Greco-Roman Childbearing Discourse 5
Chapter Outline 7

1 On Waves, Discourses and Intersections 11
Introduction 11
Continuity and Change in Feminist Readings 12
Women at the Center 15
Celibacy as Autonomy 21
Class—a Blind Spot? 23
A Third-Wave Approach 27
Discourse 28
Gender 31
Intersectionality 36
Conclusion 40

2 Greco-Roman Childbearing Discourse 43
Introduction 43
The Origin of Woman 44
Marriage for Procreation 49
Slaves and Procreation 51
The Fecundity of the Roman Empire 54
Deviant Women Don't Want Children 59
A Pronatalistic Gynecology 66
Childbearing Imagery 76
Conclusion 83

3 The Pastoral Epistles 85
Introduction 85
Date, Place, Authorship, Genre 85
What Do Scholars Say about 1 Tim 2:15? 87

Salvation in the Pastoral Epistles 91
The Centrality of Salvation 92
Salvation, Sound Teaching and Good Deeds 94
Constructions of Gender and Class 96
The Kyriarchal Structure of the Household of God 96
Female Virtue and Vice 100
Protocols of Masculinity 106
Slaves and Constructions of Gender 110
Salvation and Childbearing in the Pastoral Epistles 112
The Context of the Passage 113
Men's Temper and Women's Dress 114
Kyriarchally Stratified Teaching Roles 119
The Gullibility of Women 123
Salvation through Childbirth 129
Conclusion 132

4 The *Acts of Andrew* 137
Introduction 137
Date, Place, Authorship, Genre 137
Summary of the Story 141
Salvation in the *Acts of Andrew* 142
The Significance of Words 143
Platonic Influence 145
An Encratite Gospel? 148
Constructions of Gender and Class 151
The Manly Apostle 151
Philosopher Masculinity 157
The Ideal Woman 161
Good and Bad Slaves 165
Salvation and Childbearing in the *Acts of Andrew* 168
The Male Birthing of the Word 169
Reproductive Homoeroticism 173
Maximilla as Christ's Wife 177
Maximilla as New Eve 180
Becoming Male, Becoming Words 186
The Wanton Slave Girl 190
Conclusion 195

5 The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 199
Introduction 199

Date, Place, Authorship, Genre 199
Summary of the Story 203
Felicitas in Labor 205
Martyrdom as Salvation 208
Salvation Guaranteed 209
Defeating the Devil 212
The Blood of the Martyrs: Sacrifice and Seed 214
Constructions of Gender and Class 215
Matron, Mother, Martyr 215
Perpetua and Her Father 219
Perpetua's Transgender Performances 222
Agonistic Masculinity 227
Transforming a Matron, Fixing a Slave 230
Female Bodies in the Arena 235
Salvation and Childbearing in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 241
Martyrdom or Motherhood? 241
God's Transgender Performances 243
Conclusion 247

Conclusion 249
Introduction 249
Salvation and Childbearing 250
Intersections of Gender and Class 251
Masculinity and Gender Models 252
Exemplary Women 253
Women, Eve, Sex 254
Birthing Salvation 255

Bibliography 257
Index of Ancient Sources 275
Index of Subjects and Names 284

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ABBREVIATIONS

Acts Andr.	*Acts of Andrew*
Acts Paul	*Acts of Paul* (*and Thecla*)
Acts Thom.	*Acts of Thomas*
Acts John	*Acts of John*
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
BDAG	Danker, F.W., W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. Chicago, 2000
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
Cult. fem	*The Apparel of Women*
Cherubim	*On the Cherubim*
Conj. Praec.	*Conjugalia Praecepta* (*Advice to Bride and Groom*)
Contempl. Life	*On the Comtemplative Life*
Cons. ux.	*Consolatio ad uxorem*
Creation	*On the Creation of the World*
Dial.	*Dialogue with Trypho*
Eum.	*Eumenides*
Fug.	*Flight in Persecution*
GE	Gregory's Epitome
Gen. an.	*Generation of Animals*
Gos. Plil.	*Gospel of Philip*
Gos. Thom.	*Gospel of Thomas*
Gyn.	Soranus, *Gynecology*
Helv.	*Ad Helviam*
Hist. an.	*History of Animals*
Ign. *Pol.*	Ignatius, *To Polycarp*
Ign. *Rom.*	Ignatius, *To the Romans*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
L.A.E.	*Life of Adam and Eve*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996
LXX	Septuagint
M. Perp. and Fel.	*Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*
Mart.	*To the Martyrs*
Menex.	*Menexenus*
Mulier. virt.	*Mulierum virtutes*
NAS	New American Standard Bible
Nat. puer.	*Nature of the Child*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

Oec.	*Oeconomicus*
OLD	Glare, P.G.W., *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford, 1982
Paed.	*Paedagogus* (*Christ the Educator*)
Pol.	*Politics*
Prot. Jas	*Protevangelium of James*
QG	*Questions and Answers on Genesis*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
Sir	Sirach
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
Spec. Laws	*On the Special Laws*
Symp.	*Symposium*
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

INTRODUCTION

What Does Salvation Have to Do with Childbearing?

A peculiar statement from the Pastoral Epistles has spurred this investigation. According to 1 Tim 2:15 women will be "saved through childbearing." Does this biblical passage suggest that women must bear children in order to be saved? Such a soteriology would be intriguing for at least two reasons. Firstly, for suggesting that salvation has anything to do with the *procreation of children*. Such a route to salvation is quite at odds with statements elsewhere in the New Testament about salvation through faith (e.g. Mark 16:16; Rom 10:9) and the role of Jesus in salvation (e.g. Luke 19:10; John 3:17; Acts 4:12; Rom 5:9–10). Indeed, many modern interpreters have found the statement "embarrassing."[1] Secondly, 1 Tim 2:15 is peculiar for suggesting a particular soteriological paradigm for *women*. If women are saved through childbearing, how are men saved? Within an early Christian context this statement from the Pastoral Epistles is quite unique, it is claimed, in suggesting *gender-specific* routes to salvation.[2] But is it really that unique? Or are there other early Christian texts that connect salvation with procreation and/or operate with a gender-specific soteriology? I will argue that salvation also bears some relation to childbearing in other early Christian texts.

The focus of this study is the interface of childbearing and salvation in three early Christian texts. I will explore the influence of cultural ideas about childbearing—childbearing discourse—on conceptions of salvation. In particular, I look at how notions of gender and class have affected this "salvation and childbearing" matrix. Gender is perhaps a more obvious category of analysis than class for such a study, but I argue that class has been a blind spot in earlier studies and thus should be incorporated in order to nuance the analysis.

I have selected three texts that I find particularly interesting for an exploration of the connections between salvation and childbearing. In addition

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[1] Stanley E. Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1 Timothy 2.15)?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993): 87.

[2] Joanna Dewey, "1 Timothy," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992), 256.

to the Pastoral Epistles, I am intrigued by the combination of childbearing and salvation themes in the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. All three texts seem to employ in one way or another childbearing discourse in connection with salvation. In all these texts, women are at the forefront and there seem to be soteriological consequences connected to childbearing. The canonical Pastoral Epistles urge women to marry and bear children and link their role in the household to salvation. As a conclusion to the instruction that women should not teach, but learn in silence, 1Tim 2:15 states: "Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."[3] The current condition of women, which necessitates salvation, is somehow connected to events in the Garden of Eden, where Eve was deceived (1Tim 2:13–14). Not only in this passage but also elsewhere in the Pastorals are women specifically instructed to be good wives and mothers. In the so-called "widows passage," women are urged to bear children: "So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us" (1Tim 5:14). In Tit 2:3–5 older women are instructed to teach the younger in their household duties, including loving husband and children, "so that the word of God may not be discredited" (v. 5). Taken together, these quotations suggest that women's role as childbearers is extremely important in the Pastorals, and perhaps somehow has soteriological implications.

In the *Acts of Andrew*, in contrast to the Pastorals, the apostle urges his female convert to take up a *continent* lifestyle—to refrain from sexuality and procreation—in order to be saved (*Acts Andr.* 16; 37–40).[4] In the narrative, the ascetic gospel preached by Andrew creates a conflict between the female convert, Maximilla, and her non-believing husband, who wants her to resume marital relations and bear him children. The husband's pleas are portrayed as evil temptations, and Maximilla's renunciation is described as a reenactment and rectification of the events in the Garden of Eden through which the female believer can undo the evil deed done by Eve (*Acts Andr.* 37). Despite these ascetic ideas, images of birth and midwifery are found to be meaningful, and they are used to illustrate the concepts of conversion

[3] Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations in English are from the New Revised Standard Version. All biblical quotations are generated by means of Bibleworks™ software.

[4] I use MacDonald's Greek text edition and English translation. See Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990).

and salvation. The male convert, Stratocles, is described as being in labor pains and giving birth to his "inner man," while the apostle Andrew acts as "midwife" (*Acts Andr.* 7–9).

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* recounts the martyr deaths of two mothers, Perpetua and Felicitas.[5] Together with a group of catechumens, the two women confess to being Christians. They are convicted of sacrilege and sentenced to fight wild beasts in the amphitheater. The upper-class *matrona* Perpetua has an infant that she breastfeeds in prison, whereas the slave woman Felicitas is pregnant and gives birth only days before their martyrdom. Perpetua's love and concern for her child are movingly described, as is her father's desperate attempts to make her choose life—her own and her son's—instead of death. Still, both women choose Christian confession over motherhood. They give up their children in their pursuit of salvation and eternal life through martyrdom. Thus there seems to be a potential conflict between childbearing and salvation in this narrative. In the *Martyrdom*, as in the two other texts, there are references to the Garden of Eden. The female martyrs' victory in the arena is described as a victory over the devil that has connotations to the story of the fall in Gen 3 (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 4.4–7; 10.7–11).

These three texts by no means exhaust the potential of early Christian texts that could be studied from the perspective of childbearing discourse and its relation to soteriology. For example, a text such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, in which it is preached that "there is … no resurrection unless you remain chaste," could be interesting from this perspective.[6] Clement of Alexandria's *Christ the Educator* is another. Clement develops the imagery of conception, birth and childhood applied to the Christian life in his guide to proper Christian behavior, and he also discusses the merits of marriage and virginity for women as well as men.[7] A third example is the Nag Hammadi treatise *Exegesis on the Soul*, in which the soul is cast as a woman with a

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[5] I use Musurillo's Latin text edition and English translation. See "The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas," in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

[6] *Acts Paul* 12. In this second-century narrative, allusion is made to a group of heretics who preach that "the resurrection … has already taken place in the children" (*Acts Paul* 14).

[7] See e.g. *Paed.* 1.6.41; 2.10.83–101. See Buell's discussion of these traits in Denise Kimber Buell, "Ambiguous Legacy: A Feminist Commentary on Clement of Alexandria's Works," in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature* ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2008); Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians. Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

mind-womb, which receives divine seeds of salvation.[8] Limitations of space and time have, however, restricted me to the aforementioned texts.

There are several reasons why I find these texts interesting to study together. Firstly, beyond the fact that they all clearly establish childbearing and salvation as central and somehow connected concepts and come from more or less the same time period (probably ranging from about 100–210 CE), they are quite different in a number of ways. The texts combine childbearing and salvation in seemingly quite different ways: they differ in their views on *how* procreation relates to salvation. The Pastorals seem to propose a more or less opposite route to salvation for women in comparison to the *Acts of Andrew*. Whereas the first text preaches "salvation through childbearing," the second seemingly preaches salvation through sexual renunciation and attaches no value to physical offspring. The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, with its dialectic ambivalence concerning childbearing and motherhood, is different from both the Pastorals and the *Acts of Andrew*. Moreover, they represent different geographical (at least Asia Minor and North Africa) and linguistic areas (Greek and Latin).[9] The texts also belong to quite different genres. One has the form of a letter-collection, the two others are different types of narratives. The three texts may, then, represent the variation of early Christian employment of childbearing discourse and thus reveal the discursive negotiations at work in the development of soteriological concepts.

Secondly, in all the chosen texts there are references to Eve. The figure of Eve is somehow linked to women's reproductive capacity, motherhood and salvation. I am interested in how these texts include childbearing as a component in their construction of salvation history. The story of creation and fall in Gen 2–3 was an important etiological myth in Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity. It was a story that explained the current human condition, understood as being in need of redemption and salvation.[10] God's punishment of Eve was pain in childbirth and submission under a husband (Gen 3:16). If childbearing is part of God's punishment, is it also part of the redemption? Or is it a state that must be overcome to achieve salvation?

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[8] *Exegesis on the Soul* 127–134. See Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth. Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[9] Each text will be dated and given a closer geographical location in the respective chapters. See Chapters Three, Four and Five.

[10] Heikki Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs. The Thought World of Early Christians* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2010), 137–138.

These are questions that seem to lie under the surface in the selected texts. The way these texts draw upon Gen 2–3 will form an important part of this study.

Finally, the three chosen texts have all received a fair amount of attention within feminist scholarship. Feminist research on early Christian texts has expanded our knowledge of and perspectives on early Christianity. With this study, I wish to add to this knowledge production about constructions of gender and the "place" of women in early Christian texts by choosing a new subject matter—salvation's relation to childbearing—and adding another axis of power that intersects with gender—that of class.

Greco-Roman Childbearing Discourse

Michel Foucault has argued that texts must be seen as events within a culture. Texts are embedded in a *discourse*, in which they simultaneously shape and are shaped by other texts. Foucault defines discourse as "a space in which various objects emerge and are continuously transformed."[11] The texts presented above, which all at some point speak about childbearing, are thus partaking in a Greco-Roman[12] childbearing discourse. If we understand statements on childbearing in early Christian texts as belonging to a wider discursive formation concerned with childbearing it may generate questions such as: How are Greco-Roman discourses on women's bodies, fertility and reproductive role reflected in early Christian texts? Did this discourse in any way shape the texts' ideas about salvation? Or vice versa, did ideas about salvation shape attitudes towards women's childbearing? Does childbearing have soteriological implications in these texts? These questions will be important in my discussion of the texts. Childbearing discourse is only one of many discursive fields within which early Christian texts interacted and took part. It is, however, a fairly unexplored perspective from which to investigate early Christian ideas about salvation, and thus may hopefully generate some new and interesting insights.

In Greco-Roman society women and men were perceived to have different roles in the procreation of children. Patriarchal notions about the

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[11] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2002), 36.

[12] I use the term 'Greco-Roman' in reference to the cultures of the Mediterranean World in antiquity, including Hellenistic Judaism. For a further discussion of the term, see Chapter One.

deficiency of women in comparison to men were integral to Greco-Roman gender discourse. Although there existed various opinions on the specific contribution of men and women in conception, most agreed that woman's most important role was to nurture the fetus through pregnancy and to give birth. The production of children was seen as the main purpose of marriage, and thus the free woman's quintessential role was to bear legitimate children.[13]

However, not only gender roles are of interest here. The social significance of reproduction and childbearing also varied in terms of a woman's social status. Whereas the production of legitimate offspring was the primary task of free, married women, slave women gave birth to children who had no legal paternity and were their master's property. It is therefore interesting to ask whether the employment of discourses of reproduction and childbearing in early Christian texts had slavery-related as well as gendered implications. I am interested in how the use of childbearing discourse in these texts possibly distributes different routes to salvation by means of a taxonomy which not only distinguishes between male and female, but also between slave and free. The three texts negotiate in different ways societal expectations about motherhood in close relation with emerging ideas about salvation, and the intersection of gender and class in this negotiation will form an important part of this study.

Greco-Roman childbearing discourse also includes the metaphorical use of concepts connected with birth and birthing. Both the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* reflect early Christian use of childbearing imagery for theological purposes. Childbearing discourse served as a source of imagery to express different aspects of the Christian belief in salvation and life after death. For example, in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Felicitas likens her own struggle in labor to her forthcoming martyrdom (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 15.5–6). Belief in life after death was, it seems, well explained through the way one experiences new life entering this world—through pregnancy and birth. In their seminal book, *Metaphors we live by*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that metaphors are among our principal vehicles of meaning and that they play a central role in the construction of social and political reality.[14] Thus, we can argue that the metaphors employed by early Christians when speaking about salvation shaped their

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[13] See further discussion in Chapter Two.

[14] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 159.

understanding of salvation in profound ways. The troubling consequences of this from a feminist point of view have been drawn out by Gail Paterson Corrington (now Streete), among others. In her book, *Her Image of Salvation*, Streete has pointed to the androcentric thrust of many of the dominant early Christian images of salvation.[15]

However, in early Christian texts, the interface of salvation and childbearing is not restricted to a metaphorical level. In the Pastoral Epistles physical childbearing is encouraged and held up as an important part of the life of a free, married woman. It is in this context the author claims that women will be "saved through childbearing." Except for a reference to the "water of rebirth" in Tit 3:5, childbearing does not seem to have been employed as a soteriological *metaphor* in the Pastorals. In the *Acts of Andrew*, on the other hand, childbearing *is* used as a soteriological metaphor. Drawing on Platonic tradition, the conversion of the young man Stratocles is described as a childbirth in which the apostle Andrew acts as midwife and the baby is Stratocles' "inner being." But even in this text, childbearing is something more than mere metaphor. It is part of the social reality that the heroine, Maximilla, is expected to leave behind after conversion. "Remain chaste," is Andrew's counsel to Maximilla (*Acts Andr.* 37), and her salvation seems to depend upon it. Maximilla can correct her own fall by abstaining from sexual intercourse with her husband. The same is true of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Both literal and metaphorical childbearing occur in the text. This interplay and mutual influence between metaphors and social reality in discourse is in my view very interesting, and will be a recurring theme throughout this study.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I seek to contextualize this study by presenting previous scholarship with which I am in dialogue. I situate feminist research on the Pastoral Epistles, the Apocryphal Acts and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* by applying the model of "three waves of feminism." I also introduce my own third-wave feminist approach, which is characterized by (1) an attention to discourse and ideology, and (2) to the intersectional nature of power structures.

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[15] Gail Paterson Corrington, *Her Image of Salvation. Female Saviors and Formative Christianity* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

In Chapter Two I present and discuss Greco-Roman discourses on childbearing. Attention is given to how Greek and Latin texts from antiquity present reproduction and childbearing across a range of different genres, but nevertheless, I argue, make up one discursive field.

The three following chapters are devoted to close discussions of each of the texts. I present them chronologically in three consecutive chapters (Three, Four and Five). To start with the earliest is a conventional and practical way of ordering texts. I am not, however, particularly concerned with tracing any chronological development. Rather, my interest is in the profusion of different and varying ideas and modes of expression. Each chapter starts out by introducing the text's time, place and genre and locating the interface between childbearing and salvation in the text. Then I explore the text's ideas about salvation and try to show how an analysis of the text's construction of gender and class may shed some new light on the text's soteriology. Finally, I present a reading of the interface between childbearing and salvation in the texts.

In Chapter Three (Pastoral Epistles), special attention is given to 1Tim 2:8–3:1a. I suggest that "salvation through childbearing" is an integral part of the Pastorals' *oikos* ideology, which prescribes that all believers must live in accordance with their place in the household. I also argue that a special understanding of Eve's deception, stemming from Hellenistic Judaism, has influenced the Pastorals' view of women's salvation.

In Chapter Four (*Acts of Andrew*) I am particularly concerned with the two main converts in the story, Stratocles and Maximilla. Noting the differences in Andrew's preaching and exhortation to these two characters, I argue that these differences reveal constructions of gender and class in the text and also point towards notions of salvation. In relation to Stratocles, images of sowing seed and giving birth are used to express the bringing forth of salvation. In relation to Maximilla, on the other hand, a complex typological scenario is used, wherein Maximilla/Eve must choose between Andrew/Christ/Adam and Aegeates/Satan in her quest for salvation.

In Chapter Five (*Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*) I take Felicitas' birth in prison as a starting point for exploring the class and gender differences between Perpetua, the upper-class *matrona*, and Felicitas, the slave woman. I discuss Perpetua's trans-gender performance, wherein she "becomes male," but also point towards the possibility of seeing God as "trans-gender" in his (her) actions of "birthing" salvation for the martyrs and nurturing them in the heavenly realm.

In the Conclusion I draw some connections among the three texts. I discuss the texts' different configurations of salvation and childbearing and

compare the texts' constructions of gender and class. Finally, I argue that each text, in its own specific way, employs a notion of "birthing salvation."

CHAPTER ONE

ON WAVES, DISCOURSES AND INTERSECTIONS

Introduction

In 1859, Catherine Mumford Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army, commented on 1 Tim 2:11–12 and women's right to teach and preach:

> Thank God the day is dawning with respect to this subject. Women are studying and investigating for themselves. They are claiming to be recognised as responsible human beings, answerable to *GOD* for their convictions of duty; and, urged by the Divine Spirit they are overstepping those unscriptural barriers which the Church has so long reared against its performance. Whether the Church will allow women to speak in *her* assemblies can only be a question of time; common sense, public opinion, and the blessed results of female agency will force her to give us an honest and impartial rendering of the solitary text on which she grounds her prohibitions. Then, when the true light shines and God's words take the place of man's traditions, the Doctor of Divinity who shall teach that Paul commands woman to be silent when God's Spirit urges her to speak, will be regarded much the same as we should now regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth's satellite.[1]

Booth's comment illustrates the critique raised by some women in the second half of the nineteenth century of the way in which the Bible was interpreted to exclude women from ecclesiastical power. The pamphlets, documents and books produced by Booth, Elisabeth Cady Stanton and other women of the Victorian era spurred a tradition of feminist biblical critique that is still alive and still needed.[2] This chapter aims too trace the consecutive "waves" of this critique and locate my own approach within it.

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[1] Catherine Mumford Booth, *Female Ministry* (London: Morgan & Chase, 1859), 15. Emphases original.

[2] Maureen Fitzgerald, "The Religious is Personal is Political: Foreword to the 1993 Edition of *The Woman's Bible*," in *The Woman's Bible*, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1993 (1895)), vii.

Continuity and Change in Feminist Readings

The history of feminist scholarship has been conceptualized as three consecutive "waves" of activity and theoretical development.[3] Although feminist terminology was not yet developed, the first wave of feminism came in the 1800s, according to this model.[4] Women's access to political, social and economic life (e.g. voting rights and access to educational institutions) was one of the causes on the first-wave agenda. Within New Testament scholarship, Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*[5] and Booth's *Female Ministry* are examples of first-wave feminist biblical critique. The second wave came in the 1960s and 70s, with the development of feminist theory and an explosion of feminist research within most fields of academia. The second wave had a huge impact within New Testament and Early Christian Studies[6] as well as within the wider field of women and gender in Antiquity.[7]

Since the mid-90s, some contemporary feminists have used the term 'third wave' to define their own work, but there is "no clear agreement as to what third-wave feminism is even about."[8] Rather, the third wave is charac-

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[3] See e.g. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, *Third Wave Agenda. Being Feminist, Doing Feminist* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Rebecca Munford, Stacy Gillis, and Gillian Howie, eds., *Third Wave Feminism. A Critical Exploration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[4] Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford, "Introduction," in *Third Wave Feminism*, ed. Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1.

[5] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1993 (1895)).

[6] See e.g. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, Second ed. (New York: SCM Press, 1994 (1983)); Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Michael Glazier, 1983); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed. *Searching the Scriptures. A Feminist Commentary* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1994); Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests. Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, *The Women's Bible Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1992).

[7] Among the earliest examples of this type of research are Pomeroy's monograph (first published in 1975) and the sourcebook by Lefkowitz and Fant, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1995 (1975)); Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1982). For a general survey of research on women and gender in antiquity, see the introductions in Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001); Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner, *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[8] Jane Spencer, "Introduction: Genealogies," in *Third Wave Feminism*, ed. Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 9.

terized by its hybridity: contradiction, multiplicity and polyphony are catchwords in attempts at self-description.[9] Thus, third-wave feminism may be considered a moment in time or a generation rather than a consolidated group. A postmodern outlook and a critique of the category of 'woman' as a stable entity may, however, be seen as central to the third wave.[10] The term 'third wave' was initially used by feminists of color who challenged the white hegemony of earlier feminisms. Third-wave feminism incorporates this critique by "negotiating multicultural and antiracist standpoints" and by striving to include "persons of various genders, sexualities, nationalities and classes."[11] Lesley Heywood and Jennifer Drake locate third-wave feminism in opposition to post-feminism but in continuity with second-wave feminism:

> To us the second and third waves of feminism are neither incompatible nor opposed. Rather we define feminism's third wave as a movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures.[12]

Models have their limitations, and the three-waves model also has its weaknesses.[13] My intention in using the categories of second- and third-wave feminism is to stress the dialectical movement between continuity and change. I find the model useful as an interpretative framework that explains many of the changes that took place in the 1990s within feminist biblical studies. In an overview of interpretations of Gal. 3:28 Dale Martin has fruitfully applied the model of three waves of feminism.[14] He argues that the first

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[9] See the introductions in Munford, Gillis, and Howie, eds., *Third Wave Feminism. A Critical Exploration*; Heywood and Drake, *Third Wave Agenda. Being Feminist, Doing Feminist*.

[10] R. Claire Snyder, "What Is Third Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (2008): 183.

[11] Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, "Introduction," in *Third Wave Agenda*, ed. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 10, 8. Note, however, Snyder's critique that third-wave feminism exaggerates the difference by claiming as third-wave women of color who played a historically important role within the second wave, Snyder, "What Is Third Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay," 180.

[12] Heywood and Drake, "Introduction," 3.

[13] The most important weaknesses of the three-waves-model are in my view that (1) it starts with the nineteenth century, thus excluding "proto-feminist" voices from the Middle Ages and Enlightenment, such as Hildegard of Bingen, Christine de Pisan, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich and Mary Wollstonecraft; (2) it exaggerates the conformity within each wave, (cf. note above); (3) it gives a notion of development and progress.

[14] Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior. Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 88–89.

egalitarian readings of the verse came as a response to first-wave feminism and points out that during the second wave this became a majority interpretation. This liberal-egalitarian reading, Martin argues, has been challenged by a third-wave reading that questions Paul's egalitarian thrust and also questions the use of historical criticism as a source to shape current theology. These changes within feminist biblical interpretation reflect a wider paradigm shift or generational change within feminist academic studies.

Within the field of New Testament and early Christian Studies, we may discern some of the changes typical of third-wave feminism, e.g. the use of literary[15] and poststructuralist[16] criticism as well as the inclusion of multicultural approaches.[17] In the metaphor of waves there is a notion of organic coherence as well as some form of metamorphosis. A wave is generated by the power of the wave behind it. Similarly, the third wave builds on but simultaneously challenges and changes second-wave feminism. Despite changes in themes and theoretical approaches, there is a strong continuity within feminist biblical critique. A sense of continuity can be found in the very fact of the continued scholarly production of readings that focus on women and gender from a perspective of ideology critique, whether it assumes the term 'feminist' or not. There is a general sense that "malestream" scholarship still needs to be challenged,[18] and that feminist and gender-critical approaches still exist only on the margins of scholarly discussion.[19]

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[15] See e.g. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Janice Capel Anderson, "Literary-Critical Methods," in *Searching the Scriptures. A Feminist Introduction*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: SCM Press, 1993); Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message. Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*, trans. Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets. A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2003 (1990)).

[16] See e.g. Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul. A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1991); Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991); Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[17] See e.g. Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2000); R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse. Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006).

[18] Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd C. Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse. Thinking beyond Thecla* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009), 6–7.

[19] See Schüssler Fiorenza's assessment of the current situation, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 8. For example, recent scholarly production on the Pastoral Epistles is heavily dom-

In the following survey of feminist research on the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* I apply the model of three waves of feminism. I will trace some of the important issues that were brought to the fore during the second wave and also point to some of the changes that took place from the early 1990s onwards, and which may, then, be described as a shift from second- to third-wave feminist scholarship. Drawing on new approaches from literary and cultural studies, new questions were asked and some previous assumptions were challenged. In particular I want to focus on the shifting evaluation of 'historical women,' asceticism and class egalitarianism. How feminist scholarship has evaluated these three topics will become important for the discussion in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

Women at the Center

The Pastorals, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* have all been given due attention by feminist scholars. They have, however, been assessed as very different in their attitudes toward women. The Pastoral Epistles have been criticized for their "undisguised hatred of women"[20] and due attention has been given to their subsequent history as a canonical proof-text, used to subordinate women and exclude them from ordained ministry.[21] The so-called Apocryphal Acts, including the *Acts of Andrew*, have, on the other hand, been regarded as somewhat gender-egalitarian documents. There are five Apocryphal Acts from the second and third centuries. These are fictional works narrating the missionary travels

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inated by conservatives with an agenda quite far from feminist concerns. See Marianne Bjelland Kartzow and Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Who Loves The Pastorals and Why?" (paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, San Diego 2007). Published in Norwegian as Anna Rebecca Solevåg and Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Hvem bryr seg om Pastoralbrevene? Nyere trender i Pastoralbrevsforskningen," *Norsk teologisk tidsskrift* 111, no. 4 (2010).

[20] Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 75.

[21] After quoting 1 Cor 14:33–36 and 1 Tim 2:11–15, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza asserts that these texts "bespeak the centuries of wo/men's silencing that have shaped all western academic and religious discourses." Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies*, 1–2. See also Jay Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2009), 42–47; Deborah Krause, *1 Timothy* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 117. "First-wave feminist" Catherine M. Booth also devoted much space to an analysis of 1 Tim 2:11–12. Because it was "frequently cited as prohibitory of female labour in the Church, … we will give it a fair and thorough examination." Booth, *Female Ministry*, 12–13.

of individual apostles: John, Paul, Peter, Andrew and Thomas.[22] In the 1980s these texts were understood to provide a different script from which to read women's place in the early Christian movement. These texts' focus on female heroines gave the impression that at least in some early Christian communities women gained equality, autonomy and freedom.[23] Likewise, the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* became popular among feminist scholars because of its "female point of view," and it was celebrated as the first Christian text written by a woman.[24]

The patriarchal thrust of the Pastoral Epistles, with their direct exhortations to women to be silent and subordinate to men, revealed for many feminist commentators that "women's active participation and leadership in the target communities were at the center of the Pastor's anxiety."[25] Because women were making themselves heard, the Pastor, whose authority and power were thereby threatened, sought to slander and silence these women. Jouette Bassler's influential thesis was that the widows passage (1Tim 5:3–16) was written to diminish the power and size of a "circle of widows grown to an unacceptable size."[26] This circle included virgins as well as widows, attracted by the freedom "from the hierarchical dominance of either father or husband, freed from the demands of childbearing and rearing, freed even

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[22] Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, trans. Brian McNeil (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 2–3.

[23] See e.g. Virginia Burrus, "Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts," *Semeia* 38 (1986); Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980). See also Bassler, who uses the terms "equality," "autonomy" and "freedom" to describe the community behind these texts. Jouette M. Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1Tim 5:3–16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, no. 1 (1984): 24.

[24] According to Rader, female authorship "distinguishes it as the earliest extant Christian literature written from a feminine viewpoint, a veritable *rara avis* among the male depictions of women in past history." Rosemary Rader, "The *Martyrdom of Perpetua*. A Protest Account of Third-Century Christianity," in *A Lost Tradition. Women Writers of The Early Church*, ed. Patricia Wilson-Kastner, et al. (New York: University Press of America, 1981), 3; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 160. See also Maureen A. Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," in *Searching the Scriptures. A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1994), 830.

[25] Linda M. Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," in *Searching the Scriptures. A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1994), 378. See also Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 188–189.

[26] Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1Tim 5:3–16," 34.

from pressing economic concerns."[27] The Pastoral Epistles thus also illustrated a stage in church development characterized by the patriarchalization of church offices.[28] As Bassler notes: "the original *communitas* model that seems to lie behind Paul's letters, a model based on equal standing and equal acceptance of all members, was soon eroded by forces of time and public opinion into the patriarchal model of contemporary society in which roles were defined by the dominant-submissive pattern of the extended family."[29] Although there is no doubt that the Pastorals contain these patriarchal elements, it has been questioned more recently whether the development was quite so straightforward. It is now more common to regard diversity and contention as present at all stages of church development than to posit an early "golden age."[30]

The Apocryphal Acts were, then, seen as more "woman-friendly" than the Pastoral Epistles, perhaps even in direct opposition to these Pseudo-Pauline letters, as two competing strands of Christianity. It was believed, building on a similar evaluation of the ancient Greek novels, that the readership of the Acts was mainly made up of women.[31] But could also authorship be linked to women? In The *Revolt of the Widows*, Stevan Davies sought to "determine what kind of Christian person predominated in the community behind the Acts."[32] He contended that the Acts derived from "communities of continent Christian women," and were written by "literate widows and deaconesses."[33] According to Davies, the Apocryphal Acts revealed the concerns of women who had rebelled against pagan husbands as well as the male hierarchy of the church, and thus displayed contempt for men.[34]

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[27] Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3–16," 36.

[28] See e.g. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, 201; Lone Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy," in *The Formation of the Early Church*, ed. Jostein Ådna (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 179–180; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 288–291.

[29] Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3–16," 30–31.

[30] Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006), 1–3. Schüssler Fiorenza has protested against accusations that she posits a "golden age" in *In Memory of Her* and argues for a model that "seeks to conceptualize early Christianities and their struggles as a pluriform movement of wo/men and men engaged in an ongoing debate over equality and full 'citizenship.'" Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies*, 146–148.

[31] Rosa Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 216.

[32] Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts*, 16.

[33] Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts*, 50, 109.

[34] Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts*, 114–116.

The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* has been—and still is—particularly popular among scholars with an interest in women.[35] In this story, the young woman Thecla is converted by Paul's ascetic message, miraculously survives death sentences in the arena twice, baptizes herself and is finally commissioned by Paul to preach the word of God.[36] Dennis MacDonald argued that female story tellers stood behind the legends contained in the *Acts of Paul*, including the Thecla-cycle. These women were widows or ascetics, "women outside the *oikia*, hostile to Rome, and alienated from Asia Minor society."[37] He posited that the female story tellers who told the legends about Thecla were the same women who were derided by Pastoral Paul as telling "old wives' tales" in 1Tim 4:7.[38] Both Davies and MacDonald compared the material in the Apocryphal Acts with the Pastoral Epistles. Davies understood the Apocryphal Acts' call to rebellion against husbands and silence about the authority of bishops, presbyters and deacons as a reaction against the male church hierarchy, which was represented by "such men as the author of First Timothy."[39] MacDonald based the connection on oral legends about Paul. The authors of the *Acts of Paul* and the Pastoral Epistles both knew these legends, and the author of the Pastorals wrote a pseudonymous letter in Paul's name to correct them and bend the memory of Paul toward social conservatism.[40]

Early feminist studies of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* focused on the gender-egalitarian potential in Perpetua's break with her father.[41]

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[35] See e.g. Outi Lehtipuu, "The Example of Thecla and the Example(s) of Paul: Disputing Women's Role in Early Christianity," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religion. Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Paul A. Holloway, and James A. Kelhoffer, *WUNT* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Gail P.C. Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); Maud Burnett McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins from Thecla to Joan of Arc* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla. A tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jan N. Bremmer, *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996); Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

[36] For an English translation, see "The Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, ed. John K. Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[37] MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*, 53.

[38] MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*, 77.

[39] Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows. The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts*, 114.

[40] MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle. The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*, 59, 65–66.

[41] Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity."; Mary R. Lefkowitz, "The Motivations for St. Perpetua's Martyrdom," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44, no. 3 (1976).

Mary Lefkowitz argued that: "the religion which Perpetua adopts appears to encourage more a-sexual, fraternal relationships between men and women."[42] Perpetua was also seen as an example of a woman with some sort of leadership role within her Christian community.[43] According to Joyce Salisbury, her qualification for leadership was her prophetic ability, apparent in her dreams and visions.[44]

From the survey given here it is clear that some sort of reconstruction of historical women was central in the studies from this period. The so-called "linguistic turn" within historiography has posed some serious challenges to such an approach. Leading theorists such as Derrida and Foucault have pointed out the political implications of language and the hierarchical relations to power inherent in it.[45] A postmodern outlook questions the possibility of reconstructing a discernible reality on the basis of historical texts. Moreover, within third-wave feminism postmodern theories have been used to question the unified subject of 'woman' as the proper subject of feminist analysis. Is 'woman' the same in all historical periods? Is 'woman' the same despite differences of age, class, nationality, sexual orientation, levels of ability, etc.? Thus, there is a shift in the 1990s within feminist studies of early Christian texts, both regarding the issue of historical reconstruction and regarding the category of 'woman.' Virginia Burrus describes these changes, arguing that: "gender now signals interest in the social construction of men's roles as well as women's and/or in the discursive production of masculinity as well as femininity."[46]

Kate Cooper's reading of the Apocryphal Acts exemplifies both these theoretical changes. In *The Virgin and the Bride* she argues that "wherever a woman is mentioned a man's character is being judged."[47] In other

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[42] Lefkowitz, "The Motivations for St. Perpetua's Martyrdom," 421.

[43] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, 179–180.

[44] Joyce E. Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion. The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 66.

[45] Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 132.

[46] Virginia Burrus, "Mapping as Metamorphosis: Initial Reflections on Gender and Ancient Religious Discourses," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2. Burrus' own scholarship has also been used to exemplify the shift from modern to postmodern gender analysis in early Christian studies, see Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse. Thinking beyond Thecla*, 139–145.

[47] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 65.

words, ancient texts do not reveal as much as we may want about historical women, but are rather telling a story about male representation and rhetoric. Explicitly arguing against Davies, she claims that the prominence of women in the Apocryphal Acts is not due to female audience or readership. Rather, "ancient writers dwelled on the trials of a virtuous heroine for literary, rhetorical, and even quasi-pornographic reasons."[48] Cooper, Deborah Krause, Elizabeth Castelli and Judith Perkins are among the scholars working on the Pastorals, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* who rely on poststructural theory in their readings.[49] The change of focus from women to gender has led some scholars to look at the representation of men as well as women in the text.[50]

Far from all feminist scholars of ancient Christianity now embrace a postmodern reading of texts. The "linguistic turn" poses a dilemma for some feminist scholars on Christian origins precisely because it questions the possibility of recovering historical women behind the texts. Shelly Matthews, for example, has criticized poststructural interpretations such as Cooper's, wherein "each woman in the text becomes a sign, a means of communication between men, but serves no other possible function."[51] She is wary of research that focuses only on textual representation without also taking historical women's agency into consideration.[52] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza takes a similar position. She concurs with postmodern discourse analysis that "all texts, interpretations and historical reconstructions are relative and perspectival." But she resists the relativism in this position, arguing that one still needs to reconstruct "the history of freedom as the past of those who have struggled for freedom, human dignity, and equality."[53]

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[48] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 62–63.

[49] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 14–17; Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 2–6; Krause, *1 Timothy*, xi–xii; Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 70–78.

[50] See e.g. L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Jennifer A. Glancy, "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles," in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, *Semeia Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*.

[51] Shelly Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla. Issues in Feminist Historiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, no. 2, 2001: 50.

[52] Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla. Issues in Feminist Historiography," 46.

[53] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies*, 138. Martin has commented that Scüssler Fiorenza does not fit neatly into the categories of second- and third-wave feminism. See Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior. Gender and Sexuality in Biblical*

Celibacy as Autonomy

A second area in which we may discern a change from second- to third-wave feminism is in the evaluation of asceticism and sexual renunciation. The impact of asceticism on women's place in early Christianity has been a recurring theme in feminist scholarship.[54] Ross Kraemer has argued that ascetic forms of Christianity offered women autonomy and public roles, and that this fact may have been a motivation for their conversion.[55] The idea of a conflict in early Christianity between women attracted to celibate forms of Christianity and men who felt their authority threatened by this, has also shaped feminist research on the Pastoral Epistles.[56] As noted, Bassler interpreted the conflict between the widows and the Pastoral author in these terms, and argued that the Pastor was trying to decrease the widows' circle, which had swollen out of proportion due to women's attraction to a celibate lifestyle "and the concomitant liberation … from the patriarchal family structure and responsibilities."[57]

Burrus applied a similar perspective to Kraemer to what she called the "chastity stories" of the Apocryphal Acts.[58] Following MacDonald, she regarded them as oral folk tales told by women:

> The tellers and audiences were women who experienced tension within the institution of patriarchal marriage and who felt themselves to be in conflict with the social and political powers which backed this institution.[59]

Interpretation, 220 n. 38. See also Kraemer's assessment of the current situation. Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses. Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[54] See e.g. Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Virginity and its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity," in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: Continuum, 2008); Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation. Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on the History of Religions (New York: Colombia University Press, 1988).

[55] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, 139, 55.

[56] Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 94; MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, 176.

[57] Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1Tim 5:3–16," 38. For a similar assessment, see Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 159–165.

[58] See Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy. Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen Press, 1987).

[59] Burrus, "Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts," 111.

According to Burrus, the social function of the "chastity stories" helped define divorcees, widows and virgins as a distinct social group and validated their beliefs and practices, whereas for married women the stories functioned as "catharsis" and "wish-fulfillment."[60] The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* has also been seen as "liberating," although sexual renunciation is not a theme per se. Perpetua's actions and her visionary transformation into a man led scholars to regard the *Martyrdom* as part of an early Christian tradition that transcended "the expectations placed upon her female sexuality."[61]

As Martin observed concerning Gal 3:28, such "liberal-egalitarian" readings, common in the second wave, were challenged by more radical third-wave interpretations.[62] The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, as well as the Apocryphal Acts, are now at best considered to contain a more dubious message, containing patriarchal as well as egalitarian traits.[63] In Cooper's understanding, these texts are neither ascetic nor liberating for women—in so far as they are interested in women at all. She argues that the women's asceticism is only a rhetorical device. The Acts use continence as a narrative strategy to challenge the social order of the city and to posit the apostle as morally superior to the elite men who oppose his message: "The challenge by the apostle to the householder is the urgent message of these narratives, and it is essentially a conflict *between men*. The challenge posed here by Christianity is not really about women, or even about sexual continence, but about authority and the social order."[64]

Another change Martin notes is that a third-wave reading of Gal 3:28 "challenges the very 'reality' of the modern dimorphic, dualistic, and I would say heterosexist, construction of sexuality."[65] Critique of binary opposition is an important contribution from third-wave feminism. In the case of early Christian texts, such a critique may be seen in the questioning of the strict

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[60] Burrus, "Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts," 113–114.

[61] Rader, "The *Martyrdom of Perpetua*. A Protest Account of Third-Century Christianity," 3. See also Christine Trevett, *Montanism. Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 181; Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," 836–837.

[62] Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior. Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*, 88.

[63] See e.g. Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*; Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*; Lehtipuu, "The Example of Thecla and the Example(s) of Paul: Disputing Women's Role in Early Christianity."; McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins from Thecla to Joan of Arc*.

[64] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 55. Emphasis original.

[65] Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior. Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*, 88.

dichotomy that was earlier constructed between ascetic and married women. In *A Woman's Place*, Margaret MacDonald and Carolyn Osiek point to patterns of continuity between the lives of married and unmarried women:

> In the period of house churches the lives of married and unmarried women overlapped, to the point where widows may have combined ministries involving prayer and various good works for the community with caring for children and the domestic training of younger women.[66]

Outi Lehtipuu points out that the freedom offered through asceticism was relative for several reasons.[67] Firstly, she argues, upper-class women already had a certain freedom, "regardless of the rise of Christianity and stories like that of Thecla." Secondly, men were also attracted to asceticism, thus "autonomy" should not be seen as the primary reason for choosing a celibate lifestyle. Finally, Lehtipuu argues that few women actually made the choice of celibacy themselves. Rather, it was the parents who made it for them in much the same way as it was their responsibility to arrange a marriage.

Class—a Blind Spot?

Finally, I should like to consider some of the reflections (or lack thereof) about class in the research history of the three texts under consideration. The feminist readings of the Pastoral Epistles have until very recently not been explicitly interested in class. The focus has primarily been on the "women's passages" in the letters, thus giving less attention to the Household codes directed towards slaves (1 Tim 6:1–2; Tit 2:9–10). Few have reflected on the place of female slaves, for example.[68]

Burrus argued that there was a distinct social group of widows and virgins who told the "chastity stories" of the Apocryphal Acts. She ventured to speculate that if some of these were independently wealthy, they may

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[66] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 49, 246. See also MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. The Power of the Hysterical Woman*, 188.

[67] For this and the following quotations: Lehtipuu, "The Example of Thecla and the Example(s) of Paul: Disputing Women's Role in Early Christianity," 351.

[68] Schüssler Fiorenza explicitly notes slave-women in a comment on the Pastorals in *In Memory of Her*, but only briefly, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 291. In later works, she has devoted much more attention to the category of class. See e.g. her discussion of the "submission codes" in 1 Pet 2:11–3:12, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word. Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2007), esp. 174–181.

have supported poorer women: "It is intriguing to speculate—but difficult to prove—that the women who told the chastity stories lived together in communities which embraced women of all ages and classes."[69] Similarly, the fellow suffering of the upper-class matron Perpetua and the slave Felicitas has been seen as "a graphic exposition of Gal 3:28."[70] Salisbury has claimed that "when Perpetua and her slave Felicity were equal in martyrdom, they made a dramatic statement that Christianity transcended social structure instead of preserving it."[71]

Such class-egalitarian readings may also be found in studies that draw on poststructural theory. Perkins, in *The Suffering Self*, also stressed the social disruption intended in both the Apocryphal Acts and the Martyr Acts.[72] In contrast to the Greek romances, where marriage is the happy ending of the tale, death is the "happy ending" of these stories, she oberves. These different endings underscored their different social functions:

> Unlike the *Apocryphal Acts* and the *Martyr Acts*, where the death providing the happy ending tokened a rejection of the surrounding social world, the marriage concluding the romance affirmed that world.[73]

The new types of narrative that Christians produced functioned to subvert social hierarchies, containing "a social agenda" that contested "the power and routes to power inhering in the surrounding culture."[74] Perkins analyzed one of the Acts, the *Acts of Peter*, and concluded that it "reflects an estrangement from the surrounding political and social culture that devalued classes other than the wealthy and wellborn."

Andrew Jacobs, too, reads the ascetic conversion stories in the Apocryphal Acts as egalitarian. He contends that a new upper-class family ethics was evolving in the first centuries CE, an ethics of conjugal harmony (*concordia*) that replaced the model of patriarchal authority (*patria potestas*).[75]

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[69] Burrus, "Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts," 114.

[70] Trevett, *Montanism. Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*, 183.

[71] Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion. The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman*, 13. See also Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," 848–849.

[72] Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 28–30.

[73] Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 102.

[74] For this and the following quotation: Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 125, 39.

[75] Andrew S. Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2006), esp. 24–35.

This elite conjugal union of husband and wife is rejected in the Apocryphal Acts in order to place Christian virtue in opposition to upper-class morality:

> A couple turns away from an upper-class marital union upon learning its moral deficiencies, and instead enters into a spiritualized marriage in turn subordinated to their new 'kinship,' in which their 'brethren' could as easily be slaves as kings.[76]

Jacobs regards the Apocryphal Acts as self-consciously written from a lower-class perspective that "enter into and deconstruct the upper-class notion of symbiotic partnership … and replace it with a distinctly un-classed notion of kinship, *sungeneia*."[77] This does not necessarily mean that the texts were produced by representatives of the lower classes, he allows, but were, rather, produced by Christian communities who sought empowerment through "the rejection of class as a marker of ethical superiority."

Jennifer Glancy has pointed out that Maximilla's use of her slave Euclia as her surrogate body in the marriage bed promotes rather than opposes an upper-class ethics. She argues, against Jacobs, that "the *Acts of Andrew* does denigrate one version of upper-class sexual ethics, which posits procreative, conjugal sex as a civic duty. However, it promotes another version of upper-class sexual ethics, in which abstinence from polluting sexual activity is a distinctively elite prerogative."[78] Cooper, too, takes care to distinguish between social subversion and class egalitarianism in her reading of the Apocryphal Acts. She makes it clear that the resentment of the politically powerful that can be detected in the texts is not necessarily a reflection of a perspective from below: "As the representative of a central political power, a proconsul such as Aegeates would have been resented even more by his provincial colleagues than by the less privileged."[79] Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner have critiqued the notion of subversive elements in early Christianity more generally, arguing that it is necessary to appreciate "the early Christian imitation of and desire for power."[80]

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[76] Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," 42.

[77] For this and the following quotations: Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," 43–44.

[78] Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22.

[79] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 67.

[80] Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse. Thinking beyond Thecla*, 115.

With regard to the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* too, there is a growing interest in the class difference between the two female protagonists.[81] It becomes apparent from this survey that the hierarchical structure of relationships *between women* would benefit from further scrutiny. As Marianne Bjelland Kartzow has noted:

> If researchers concerned with women or family in the past are primarily interested in privileged women, we ignore that women are also part of hierarchies in which other women are oppressed. If our interest in gender leads our attention towards women who are only oppressed "as women" we may overlook that such women are subject to "pure sexism" because they are on top of other hierarchical systems.[82]

Lately, the inter-disciplinary field of Intersectionality has been developed to integrate the analysis of multiple forms of oppression (see discussion below). Resent research on the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* reflects an increasing awareness that a socially subversive text is not necessarily class egalitarian. Several recent studies look at how categories of class interact and intersect with categories of gender.[83]

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[81] See e.g. Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas—Reinterpreting Empire, Family and Gender," in *Identity Formation in the New Testament*, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winninge (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Virginia Burrus, "Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr," in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2008); John W. Marshall, "Postcolonialism and the Practice of History," in *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements in Historical-Critical Discourse*, ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

[82] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Striking Family Hierarchies: Luke 12:35–48, Gender and Slavery," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 4 (2010).

[83] For the Pastoral Epistles, see Glancy's discussion of the household codes in Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 139–152. See also Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 139–140. For the *Acts of Andrew*, see Saundra Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 301–305; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 22–23, 156; Lehtipuu, "The Example of Thecla and the Example(s) of Paul: Disputing Women's Role in Early Christianity," 352–354. For the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, see Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford Univerisy Press, 2010), 57–59; Solevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas—Reinterpreting Empire, Family and Gender."; Marshall, "Postcolonialism and the Practice of History," 102–103; Lone Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," in *Lidelsens former og figurer*, ed. Bodil Ejrnæs and Lone Fatum (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2002), 230.

A Third-Wave Approach

What are the tools or reading strategies of a third-wave feminist approach to early Christian texts? The hybridity and polyphony that characterize third-wave feminism can also be seen in the proliferation in methodologies and approaches applied in recent works. Within New Testament and early Christian studies there are now feminist scholars who draw on literary, post-colonial, ecological, critical race and/or Marxist theories, to mention only a few. As Stichele and Penner point out: "there is neither an absolute system of meaning nor a fixed methodology for determining meaning in texts, and, as a result, no right way of studying the past."[84] Each method offers "*a specific way but not the only way of 'seeing'* phenomena." The question is, then: what set of tools is appropriate for my particular set of questions? What may be a useful optic for investigating the crossroads of childbearing and salvation in early Christianity?

In the survey above, I focused on three trends within the second-wave paradigm and some new, emerging third-wave tendencies which will be taken further in this study. Concerning the first ('woman' as a category of analysis), I look at constructions of gender, both male and female, within the texts that will be analyzed. How do men and women interact? What are the power relations? What characterizes hegemonic femininity and masculinity? Concerning the second (asceticism), I continue the third wave rethinking of the connections between asceticism and female autonomy by considering the ideological as well as social constructions regarding reproduction and childbearing. What are the place and the value of the childbearing body in each of these texts? Concerning the third tendency (blind spot concerning class), I argue that a closer scrutiny of the intersection of gender with class is called for as one realizes that the women foregrounded in these texts represent a particular class of women, i.e. the free and, to a large extent, upper-class.

The reading strategies I have chosen to explore this set of questions with will be presented in the following section. My main analytical perspectives are, on the one hand, a discursive understanding of text and, on the other, an intersectional understanding of power relations that includes gender as well as class.

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[84] For this and the following quotation: Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse. Thinking beyond Thecla*, 181–182. Emphasis original.

Discourse

Foucault argues that all texts are part of a certain discourse contained in time and space; they are embedded in a particular social and cultural context. Discourse, in this understanding, is seen as a web of texts that draw on one another, but also shape one another. With this emphasis on discourse, Foucault moved the analysis of texts away from authorial intention to their relations with other texts; towards a text's effects, rather than its composition. In *The Archeology of Knowledge* he argues that the book and the *œuvre* are unities that need to be questioned; they are not as clear-cut as they might seem.[85] A book should rather be seen as a node within a network, interconnected with other books, texts, and sentences: "it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse."[86] According to Foucault, a text is an event within the circulation of discourse in culture, and must be treated not only in terms of what differentiates it from other texts circulating at the same time but also in terms of what permits a certain set of statements to emerge.[87] To analyze a statement within a discursive field, one should ask questions like: What are the conditions of its existence? What are its limits? What are the correlations to other statements that may be connected? What other forms of statements does it exclude?[88]

In order to interpret a text, then, it should be located within a wider discursive field. In this field there is always a contest for power. For Foucault, power is not a "thing" that some people hold and others do not. Rather it is a quality inherent in relationships between people.[89] Texts, too, are infiltrated in these power relations. Thus, there is no innocent discourse—it is always interwoven with power and ideology. Elisabeth Castelli calls this a "lack of innocence" inherent in the term 'discourse.' She points to: "the inability of any language to represent simply and disinterestedly. Discourse is an active constructor of ideology; it is through discourse that ideology makes its claims to truth."[90] Foucault's understanding of power is related to his critique of historiography. History should not be the search for origins or truth, but should take seriously the power relations that we find, he argued:

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[85] Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 25.
[86] Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 26.
[87] Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault. An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 10.
[88] Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 30–31.
[89] Castelli, *Imitating Paul. A Discourse of Power*, 42.
[90] Castelli, *Imitating Paul. A Discourse of Power*, 53.

> The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning, though this is not to say that it is absurd or incoherent. On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible of analysis down to the smallest detail—but this is in accordance with the intelligibility of struggles, of strategies and tactics.[91]

Analyses of different aspects of early Christian discourse have fruitfully drawn on Foucault.[92] In a similar vein, I regard the three texts that form part of my investigation—which all speak about salvation in relation to childbearing—as participating in Greco-Roman discourses on gender, reproduction and childbearing. This does not mean that these texts are not also engaged in other discursive webs, but I want to follow this particular line of investigation—the web of childbearing discourses—because it has not previously been studied. The term "Greco-Roman discourse(s)" is employed in this thesis to signify a common cultural exchange of ideas, available to us through texts and artifacts. Although there are variations, both temporally and geographically, the political expansion of the Hellenistic dynasties and subsequently the Roman Empire created a space where exchange was prolific, based on the common languages of Greek and Latin.[93] This cultural exchange also includes Hellenistic Jewish writings, such as the Septuagint, the Pseudepigrapha and the works of Philo and Josephus, produced in Greek. Most Diaspora Jews lived in the eastern parts of the Empire or in Rome and thus most Jewish diaspora texts are in Greek.[94] The material chosen for this study reflects the language difference between east and west.

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[91] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 114.

[92] See e.g. Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, JSNTSup (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Castelli, *Imitating Paul. A Discourse of Power*; Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse. Thinking beyond Thecla*. On the affinities of Christian and Roman discourses, see Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse*. On the Christian discourse of martyrdom see Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*; Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*. The more recent works by Virginia Burrus are also inspired by postmodern theory, including Foucault. See e.g. Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame. Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints. An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Virginia Burrus, *Begotten, Not Made. Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[93] Andrew Erskine, *Roman Imperialism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 59.

[94] Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 30–32.

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, which was written in Latin, comes from the western part, whereas the two other texts are originally Greek and probably stem from the eastern part of the Roman Empire. However, all were translated—into Greek and Latin respectively—at an early stage, thus showing how porous these language borders were.

Conventions of genre in a culture necessarily constrain the way utterances may be expressed. Ancient historian Suzanne Dixon has shown how Roman women are portrayed very differently in different genres and thus argues that we must "read" the texts with this in mind:

> How do we 'read' the Roman women who appear as excellent mothers, pious daughters and faithful freedwomen on tombstones, as wicked stepmothers in law and literature, as scheming trollops in history, biography and law-court speeches, as desirable mistresses in elegiac poetry, as witches in satire, as prostitutes in comedy and graffiti and as midwives in tombstone reliefs, medical writings and epitaphs?[95]

Dixon advocates the use of a wide range of texts from antiquity and the need to assess the impact of *genre*. When she studies the different genres, a variety of pictures emerge. The depiction of a dead wife by her husband on a tombstone differs greatly from the description of leisured women in satire. Thus, an understanding of the function and focus of each genre becomes important: "Understanding genre means being alert to the gaps and biases which keep women out of some texts and to the rules determining which aspects of their lives will be highlighted in others."[96]

Issues of rhetoric, power and genre are intertwined in early Christian discourse.[97] Being attentive to a text's genre, then, is helpful because it focuses attention towards *how* events are described, attitudes are expressed and positions are negotiated. Because they have the form of letters, the Pastoral Epistles exhibit quite different literary qualities from the narrative forms of the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Greco-Roman letters were not only means of communication but also instruments of persuasion and media for displaying literary skills.[98] Narrative modes of writing, like the gospel genre and other biographical and novelistic genres, display plots and characters and offer multiple positions

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[95] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 16.

[96] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 25.

[97] Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text. Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 169.

[98] David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988), 160.

with which the hearer/reader can identify.[99] Averil Cameron has observed that early Christianity was a story-telling religion, frequently employing fictional stories such as the Apocryphal Acts as a way to "inculcate and confirm belief."[100]

However, although expressed through different literary forms, the texts I have chosen are engaged in the same discursive field and concerned with many of the same topics, and thus may be fruitfully compared and contrasted. Cameron argues that Christian writers, who were from the educated classes, were well trained in classical rhetoric. Whether they chose to write apologies, gospel narratives, or fictional letters the theory and practice of rhetoric "provided the only frame within which the truly paradoxical nature of the faith could be put into words at all."[101] Thus, one should also be aware of rhetorical and ideological strictures that exist across genres. Vander Stichele and Penner argue that all texts embed ideology in rhetoric and thus that ancient texts may fruitfully be compared across genres:

> The gap between a narrative in the book of Acts and an argument in Paul's letters, especially in terms of the use of rhetoric, is not as wide as one may initially believe, as both texts are saturated with ideology.[102]

In this study, both the particularities of genre and the rhetorical and ideological similarities across them will be taken into consideration.

Gender

As noted already, the 'historical women' who were previously at the center of attention in feminist research on the New Testament and early Christianity seem, from a postmodern vantage point, unreachable. What is the alternative, when "the Lady Vanishes"?[103] As noted above, studying the way gender appears or operates in texts, has become a fruitful approach. Joan Scott was among the first to promote gender as an analytical category in the analysis of

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[99] Kirsten Marie Hartvigsen, *Prepare the Way of the Lord. Towards a Cognitive Poetic Analysis of Audience Involvement with Characters and Events in the Markan World*, BZNW (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 17, 27–28.

[100] Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse*, 92.

[101] Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire. The Development of Christian Discourse*, 86.

[102] Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse. Thinking beyond Thecla*, 185.

[103] See Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'," *Church History* 67, no. 1 (1998).

historical texts. Rather than simply reclaiming women as historical subjects, gender should be used as an analytical tool, she argued:

> Gender, then, provides a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction. When historians look for the ways in which the concept of gender legitimizes and constructs social relationships, they develop insights into the reciprocal nature of gender and society and into the particular and contextually specific ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics.[104]

In other words, to analyze how gender operates in a text may reveal the particularity and thus the socially constructed character of gender. Scott argues for the need to historicize gender:

> by pointing to the variable and contradictory meanings attributed to sexual difference, to the political processes by which those meanings are developed and contested, to the instability and malleability of the categories 'women' and 'men,' and to the ways those categories are articulated in terms of one another.[105]

Within the field of early Christianity, Elizabeth Clark has argued the same. She insists that a feminist poststructural approach "should move beyond the purely linguistic to explore the social forces at work in these constructions."[106] Gender is not a meta-historical category. If gender constructs politics and politics constructs gender, then each historical period has its own model(s) or ideologies of gender.[107]

How, then, was gender constructed in antiquity? Studies of gender and sexuality in antiquity have been deeply influenced by Foucault and his innovative approach.[108] It is particularly his books on the history of sexu-

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[104] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986). Reprinted in Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 45–46.

[105] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 10.

[106] Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'," 31.

[107] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 27.

[108] See e.g. John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990); David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin, eds., *Before Sexuality. The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); David M. Halperin, ed. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Hallett and Skinner, *Roman Sexualities*. For discussions coupled with critique, see e.g. Simon Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity. Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Mark Golden and Peter Toohey, *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); Vigdis Songe-

ality that have been formative for this "school" of research.[109] Foucault has rightly been criticized for creating a history of sexuality that is devoid of women.[110] Foucaultian concepts have nonetheless been immensely influential within feminist theory.[111] Building on Foucault, Thomas Laqueur developed the "one-sex model" to explain how gender was conceived in antiquity. While modern society regards men and women as two different sexes and the body as always gendered, either male or female, the ancients, according to Laqueur, saw the body as something far more fluctuating. He argues that there existed, from antiquity until the late eighteenth century, a model "in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose *telos* was male."[112] Men and women were hierarchically arranged, as women were understood to be imperfect men.[113] The modern two-sex model, on the other hand, sees men and women as two different sexes and the body as always gendered, either male or female, and is concerned with "radical dimorphism, of biological divergence."[114] Laqueur has been criticized by feminist historians of antiquity who argue that the one-sex model was not hegemonic, but competed with other models more clearly based on difference, a point I will come back to in Chapter Two.[115]

Møller, *Philosophy Without Women. The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought* (London: Continuum, 2002).

[109] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1, The History of Sexuality (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 2, The History of Sexuality (New York: Vintage Books, 1985); Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 3, The History of Sexuality (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

[110] Lin Foxhall criticizes Foucault for limiting the reflexive self to an "ideal male self" in the *History of Sexuality*. Lin Foxhall, "Pandora Unbound: A Feminist Critique of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*," in *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 168. See also Songe-Møller, *Philosophy Without Women. The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, esp. 130–131, 52–54.

[111] See e.g. Judith Butler's use of 'genealogy' and her Foucaultian views on power and discourse. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[112] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 5–6.

[113] Laqueur, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, 3–8.

[114] Laqueur, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, 6.

[115] Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), 11; Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 357;

When gender becomes a category of analysis, the textual representation of men, as well as of women becomes an object of research. Within gender studies, the concept of 'masculinity' has become a fruitful concept for studying the representation of men in texts. What were the basics of masculinity in antiquity? According to Maud Gleason, the idea that male and female bodies existed on a continuum (the one-sex model) gave rise to a fear that a man could slip and become effeminate unless he closely guarded his behavior. Thus, "masculinity in the ancient world was an achieved state."[116] A man could be "read"—decoded—in search of signs of gender deviation by means of the ancient art of physiognomy. According to this art, a person's appearance, manner and expressions revealed both male and female characteristics. The physignomist's task was to decide which of the two genders *prevailed*.[117] The elite man was thus always under surveillance, always subjected to and evaluated by the gaze of his peers. Studies of ancient masculinity have shown that men were evaluated according to certain protocols. Such "protocols of masculinity," first formulated by John Winkler (for ancient Greece) and Craig Williams (for the Roman context), regulated the behavior of men and categorized them as either effeminate or manly.[118] Fredrik Ivarsson summarizes "the ground rules of Greco-Roman Masculinity" thus:

Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 40.

[116] Maud Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," in *Before Sexuality. The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 391.

[117] Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," 392. For the connection between physiognomy and masculinity see also Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men. Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[118] See Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*; Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). For studies with particular emphasis on early Christianity/Judaism, see Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom*, ed. Anders Klostergaard Petersen, Jakob Engberg, and Uffe Holmgaard (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010); Fredrik Ivarsson, "Vice Lists and Deviant Masculinity: The Rhetorical Function of 1 Corinthians 5:10–11 and 6:9–10," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd C. Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Fredrik Ivarsson, "A Man has to Do What a Man has to Do: Protocols of Masculine Sexual Behavior in 1 Corinthians 6–7," in *Identity Formation in the New Testament*, ed. Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winninge (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man. Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*.

1) Mastery is the basic criterion of masculinity. Being fully gendered as a man, as opposed to merely having the physical features held to signify a male, means being on top in relation to non-men (women, slaves, children, barbarians) and being able to control one's own passions and desires.
2) Manliness is an achievement and has to be constantly proven in competition with other men. Masculinity is always under construction.
3) Manliness is a moral quality (cf. the double meaning of *virtus* [virtue, manliness] and ἀνδρεία [courage, manliness]). Being manly is always a positive value, even when applied to a woman. By contrast, being effeminate or soft is morally reprehensible.[119]

The requirement of mastery, of always being "on top," also meant that a true man should always play the "active," penetrative role in sexual relations. Greeks and Romans thought of the sexual act as first and foremost penetration.[120] To have the active role as penetrator was the prerogative of the adult, free male. In conjunction with this idea about sexuality, the piercing of flesh through violence was dreaded by men, because it was considered womanish and passive.

Masculinity studies and queer studies have contributed with new perspectives from which to study gender and sexuality in early Christianity.[121] Glancy, Janice Anderson and Stephen Moore, among others, have used these protocols in analyses of early Jewish and Christian texts.[122] In particular they look for the two aspects of mastery outlined in 1) above in their readings. In other words, how do the texts display masculinity in terms of mastery over others and in terms of self-control? The ancient protocols of masculinity will be used as an analytical tool in my interpretation of the texts.

Can we also find "protocols of femininity" in Greco-Roman gender discourse? Effeminacy is, of course the reverse side of masculinity. To be female was in itself a deficiency and women were expected to lack, or at least not

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[119] Ivarsson, "Vice Lists and Deviant Masculinity: The Rhetorical Function of 1 Corinthians 5:10–11 and 6:9–10," 165–166.

[120] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, 18.

[121] See e.g. Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place. A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003); Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, *New Testament Masculinities* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Burrus, *Begotten, Not Made. Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*.

[122] Glancy, "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles."; Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, no. 2 (1998).

excel in, the virtues connected with masculinity. There were, however, clear cultural expectations about "the good woman," many of which were concerned with procreation and motherhood. The Greco-Roman childbearing discourse, which reflects these cultural values, will be presented in Chapter Two.

Intersectionality

As noted above, third-wave feminism incorporates multicultural and anti-racist reflections. Approaches which put these concerns at the forefront are now increasingly called 'intersectional.' The central notion of intersectionality is that "subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality."[123] Intersectionality is thus a new interdisciplinary approach at the crossroads of feminist, gender, anti-racist, post-colonial and class-sensitive modes of analysis. Inherent in this approach is, on the one hand, a critique of earlier feminist theory and practice that privileged the middle-class, white women's experience and constructed it as universal, and on the other hand, a critique of critical race theory that did not take gender into account.[124]

In the 1980s feminists of color began to criticize the racial bias underlying much of feminist theory. Bell hooks used Sojourner Truth's famous phrase, "Ain't I a Woman?" to question the assumption that white women's oppression was hegemonic,[125] whereas Patricia Hill Collins argued that Black women in America experienced interrelated structures of oppression, based on race, class and gender.[126] The term 'intersectionality' was coined by

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[123] Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality," *Feminist Review* 89 (2008): 2.

[124] Paulina de los Reyes and Diana Mulinari, *Intersektionalitet. Kritiska reflektioner över (o)jämlikhetens landskap* (Stockholm: Liber, 2005), 27.

[125] See bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1981). The quotation is an excerpt from Sojourner Truth's speech at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851: "That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?" http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.html. Retrieved Aug. 11, 2010.

[126] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 225.

Kimberlé Crenshaw in a study of African-American women's experiences of discrimination.[127] She rejected the "single-axis framework" and argued that it was necessary to analyze the various ways in which race and gender interact.[128] Women of Latin American origin, as well as Asian and African women, have similarly questioned the hegemony of a Western, middle-class perspective in feminist theory and politics. Postcolonial theory has been central in much of this critique.[129]

Judith Butler and Elizabeth Spelman have also shaped feminist theory to include heterogeneity. In Butler's words:

> If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities.[130]

According to Spelman, the notion of generic 'woman' in Western feminist thought has functioned to exclude the experiences of women who are not white and middle-class.[131] All women's experience of sexism is not the same. Further, she argues, it is a flawed assumption to assume that a white woman experiences sexism purely "as a woman": "the fact that a woman is not oppressed on account of her racial identity hardly leads to the conclusion that the sexist oppression to which she is subject can be understood without reference to her racial identity."[132] Thus, attention to difference and heterogeneous experiences of class, race and sexuality need to be integrated into feminist thought, she argues.

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[127] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex. A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," (Chicago: University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989).

[128] Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality," 89.

[129] de los Reyes and Mulinari, *Intersektionalitet. Kritiska reflektioner över (o)jämlikhetens landskap*, 68. For postcolonial critique of Eurocentric feminism, see e.g. Fernando F. Segovia, "Introduction. 'And They Began to speak in Other Tongues': Competing Modes of Discourse in Comtemporary Biblical Criticism," in *Reading from this Place*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995), esp. 29–32. For postcolonial feminist theology and biblical interpretation, see e.g. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*; Pui-lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2005).

[130] Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 4.

[131] Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1988), ix.

[132] Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, 14–15.

Intersectionality has been described as "the primary analytical tool that feminist and anti-racist scholars deploy for theorizing identity and oppression."[133] In much of the literature, it is the "categorical triad of race-class-gender" that is put forward.[134] Other vectors of oppression may be added, such as sexuality, age, dis/ability, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and religion.[135] More importantly, it is the insistence on the complex interconnections among these identity markers that is crucial to an intersectional analysis: "Any attempt to essentialize 'Blackness' or 'womanhood' or 'working classness' as specific forms of concrete oppression in additive ways inevitably conflates narratives of identity politics with descriptions of positionality."[136] Intersectionality focuses on the intersecting power structures that these different continuums represent and argues for the complexity of these structures. Such a model of interlocking rather than additive structures of oppression creates a both/and conceptual space, according to Collins. She argues that:

> All groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system … Depending on the context an individual might be an oppressor, a member of an oppressed group, or simultaneously oppressor and oppressed.[137]

Diana Mulinari and Paulina de los Reyes have also pointed out that an intersectional analytics takes care to historicize the subject under analysis. Power relations are always historically specific—situated in time and space—and change depending on economic relations, dominating ideologies and the structures of society.[138] Such a perspective allows for the use of intersectionality in historical studies.

It is only in the past few years that the framework and terminology of intersectionality has started to make its way into the field of New Testament and early Christian studies.[139] Which categories of analysis should

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133 Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality," 1.

134 Gudrun-Axeli Knapp, "Race, Class, Gender: Reclaiming Baggage in Fast Travelling Theories," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 12 (2005): 249.

135 Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 202.

136 Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," 195.

137 Collins, *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 225.

138 de los Reyes and Mulinari, *Intersektionalitet. Kritiska reflektioner över (o)jämlikhetens landskap*, 23.

139 See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction: Exploring the Intersections of Race, Gender, Status, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies," in *Prejudice and Christian Begin-*

be included in an intersectional approach to early Christianity? Schüssler Fiorenza's neologisms *kyriarchy/kyriarchal/kyriocentric* are very helpful in this regard. The terms are defined thus:

> Derived from the Greek term lord, this coinage underscores that domination is not simply a matter of patriarchal, gender-based dualism but of more comprehensive, interlocking, hierarchically ordered structures of discrimination, evident in a variety of oppressions, such as racism, poverty, heterosexism and colonialism.[140]

By employing these terms, Schüssler Fiorenza shows how important the role of the *kyrios/paterfamilias* is for understanding the intersecting power structures of antiquity. Following Schüssler Fiorenza's model, it could be argued that within the kyriarchal structure of Greco-Roman society, the groups of the household are the quintessential categories. The *kyrios* of the household held authority over wife, slaves and children. Accordingly, the most important differentials would be those of gender, status (slave/free) and age/generation. Moreover, the kyriarchal structure of the Roman Empire reached beyond the household, as the Emperor was configured as a *paterfamilias* for all his subordinates.[141] The household was understood as the microcosm of Empire and the emperor was "the ultimate father and lord (*kyrios*) par excellence."[142] The whole society was hierarchically (or kyriarchically) organized, so that conceptions of status and class included more than the distinction between slave and free. Citizenship, kinship, wealth, *ordo*, ownership of land, and gender were all important factors in evaluating a person's social status. In a multi-cultural society like the Roman Empire, ethnic and racial divisions also played a significant role, as did the differentiation between center and periphery.[143]

The centrality of the *kyrios/paterfamilias* is evident in the three texts that will be analyzed in this study. In the Pastoral Epistles the kyriarchal

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nings. Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Laura Salah Nasrallah (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

140 Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic. The Politics of Biblical Studies*, ix.

141 Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction: Exploring the Intersections of Race, Gender, Status, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies," 11–12.

142 Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word. Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 152.

143 For studies on race and ethnicity in early Christianity, see Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race. Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002). The power relations between center and periphery are central to postcolonial studies. For an introductory discussion, see Moore's Chapter 1 in, Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse. Postcolonialism and the New Testament*.

structure of the household is the basis for the organization of the *ekklesia*; in the *Acts of Andrew* the household of a representative of the Emperor is central to the plot; in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, God and Perpetua's father are depicted as opposing images of *paterfamilias*. I find Schüssler Fiorenza's concept of *kyriarchy* very useful for studies of Greco-Roman power relations. In this study, it is primarily the intersection of gender and class—in particular, the distinction between slave and free—that will be the main focus of analysis, while age and race will be brought into the discussion at certain points. This focus grows out of the above-noted tendency in previous research to study free (often elite) women and neglect women of the lower classes and slave women.

The distinction between slave and free was a major dividing line within the kyriarchal household. The term "class" is a modern concept, with no clear equivalent term in either Greek or Latin. It is important to be aware of the malleability and historical specificity of categories, but it is impossible to speak about ancient times without employing modern categories at all. As Denise Kimber Buell has pointed out:

> We can place modern categories into conversation with ancient ones without effacing their difference, even while we must also acknowledge that we can only understand those differences through the lens of our present.[144]

In this study I employ the term "class" most often to distinguish between slave and free as two "classes" of people, but I also use the term in a more nuanced way to point out differences in economic and social power, e.g. as in "upper-class" and "lower-class."

The inclusion of an intersectional optic in biblical studies is in its early stages. My analyses have only included the intersection of gender and class. Race could also fruitfully have been included as a vector ofanalysis in a reading of these texts (cf. the Egyptian in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Cretans and Jews in Titus and the status of the stranger [ξένος] in the *Acts of Andrew*), so could age, and center/periphery.

Conclusion

Feminist research on the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* has been multi-faceted and extremely productive. I have tried to conceptualize and contextualize this research history

144 Buell, *Why This New Race. Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, 14.

by employing the framework of three consecutive waves of feminism. I have argued that changes taking place from the 1990s onwards may reflect a third wave of feminist research.

My own reading strategies may be contextualized as a specific third-wave approach. I have found two tools particularly appropriate for my set of questions about salvation and childbearing. First, I apply a Foucaultian understanding of discourse, where the texts are read as part of wider Greco-Roman discourses on reproduction and childbearing. This includes an awareness of the restrictions of ancient genres, at the same time as I look for rhetorical strategies across genres. Second, I find gender to be an important analytical category, including ancient gender models and "protocols of masculinity." However, I draw on the concept of intersectionality to scrutinize the intersection of gender with class in the texts.

CHAPTER TWO

GRECO-ROMAN CHILDBEARING DISCOURSE

Introduction

In antiquity, women gave birth at home and most people would be familiar with the groans of a woman in labor.[1] The head of the household was responsible for births taking place under his (sometimes her) roof, and medical handbooks for householders dealt with parturition as well as postpartum care of mother and child.[2] There are very few sources outside the medical literature which deal directly with women in labor, but there are many sources from different genres that testify to the importance attributed to childbearing. In Foucault's words, the task is to establish these texts' "correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statements it excludes."[3]

As noted in Chapter One, different genres are often used for different purposes, and it is therefore important to pay attention to a text's genre and note how (and why) a particular genre is used. In this chapter I present some of the notions and preoccupations concerning childbearing that we find expressed in texts from antiquity. The texts have different emphases and span a wide array of different genres. I start with two important myths, the etiological tales of Pandora and of Adam and Eve. Both thematize the difference between male and female, and are concerned with the place of fertility. Next, I discuss the juridical and philosophical foundation for marriage in the Greco-Roman world. In this literature, too, there is a strong concern for childbearing: The production of legitimate heirs and citizen children was the reason for the institution of marriage. The regeneration of the population was also of primary importance to the emperors, and childbearing was therefore encouraged and monitored in a number of ways.

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[1] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 62–63.

[2] Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 171; Aline Rousselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome," in *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *A History of Women in the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1992), 40.

[3] Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 30–31.

Most people in the Empire probably knew one or more myths about the creation of the world. The majority would probably also be familiar with the basic rules for marriage and inheritance, which they would have encountered for instance through imperial propaganda. In the two last sections, I discuss some genres that were more specialized and probably known only to an educated elite: the gynecological treatises by Greek and Roman medical writers and the use of childbearing imagery in philosophical texts. However, themes recur across genres, as I intend to show: it is an interconnected, ongoing childbearing discourse.

The Origin of Woman

Cosmological speculation about the origin of gender difference is one aspect of the childbearing discourse of Greco-Roman society. Several influential creation myths tell the story about the emergence of gender difference and human reproduction.[4] It is appropriate to discuss here the Pandora myth and the Jewish tradition about Adam and Eve. The Pandora myth is one of the most well-known from Greek mythology, and the Genesis story was widely known and used among Hellenistic Jews as well as early Christians. It has been argued that in early Christianity as well as rabbinic Judaism, the Pandora model is combined with the Adam-and-Eve model from Gen 2–3.[5]

According to Hesiod's epic poem *Works and Days*, woman was a later creation than man. As revenge for stealing Zeus' fire, the gods create a woman (γυνή, 80), who has a maiden shape (παρθενικῆς, 63), and Zeus calls her Pandora. She is beautiful and knows needlework and weaving, but she also has a shameless mind (κύνεόν τε νόον, 67) and a deceitful nature (67; 79), and is full of lies and crafty words (79). She is presented to the race of men as a gift, but in reality she is "a great plague" (56). The arrival of Pandora brings sorrow as well as sickness to the race of men, but the evil of Zeus' gift is not understood until it is too late:

> For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sicknesses which bring the Fates upon men; for in misery men grow old quickly. But the woman took off the great lid of the jar with her hands and scattered all these and her thought caused sorrow and mischief to men.
>
> (*Works and Days* 90–95 [Evelyn-White, LCL])

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[4] From the Greek tradition there is the Pandora myth, as well as Plato's tale of the original androgynous being. For Plato's myth of androgyny, see *Symp*. 189c–193d.

[5] Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 46.

Hesiod narrates the genesis of the race of women also in *Theogony*. Here, too, she is a maidenlike woman (γυναῖκα παρθένον, 515) and a beautiful evil (καλὸν κακὸν, 585) who brings sorrow and death to men:

> For from her is the race of women and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmeets in hateful poverty, but only in wealth. [...] even so Zeus who thunders on high made women to be an evil to mortal men, with a nature to do evil. (*Theogony* 590–602 [Evelyn-White, LCL])

Froma Zeitlin has pointed out that neither sex nor procreation is explicitly mentioned in the myth; all is inference.[6] By oppressing woman's fertility, the Pandora myth, in contrast to the creation story in Gen 2, is not about abundance, proliferation, and expansiveness but is "rooted in an economy of scarcity, parsimony, and anxious surveillance over what man has patiently accumulated by and for himself."[7] There is, however, a connection to fertility and reproduction in the myth. Helen King has shown how Hesiod merges the terms for virgin (παρθένος) and mature woman (γυνή), and argues that "from the outset Pandora is seen as a γυνή, a fully reproductive woman, but masquerading as an innocent virgin."[8] That Pandora has a mind like a bitch (κύνεος νόυς) evokes several similarities between women and domestic dogs that King finds in Greek thought. First, there is an etymological likeness between 'dog' (κύων) and the verb for being pregnant (κύω); second, dogs were predatory beasts taken into man's service; third, they were thought to give birth easily; and, fourth, they were thought to have exceptional sexual appetites.[9] King argues that Pandora's jar has an equivalent in the Hippocratic notion of the womb as an inverted jar. Thus connections may be traced between gender myth and gynecological treatises: "For the Greeks of the Classical period it is Pandora, the separate creation who is the 'race of women,' who makes gynecology necessary."[10]

The story about the creation and fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4–3:24) was a widely used biblical passage in Hellenistic Judaism as well as early Christianity. The Septuagint (LXX) version is generally considered to be the version used by early Christians as well as Diaspora Jews.[11] The basic outline

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[6] Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other. Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 58.

[7] Zeitlin, *Playing the Other. Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature*, 60.

[8] King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 24.

[9] King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 24–25.

[10] King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 39.

[11] Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 200–201.

of the story is well known: God creates the first human being from dust and breathes life into his nostrils; God plants a garden, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from which Adam is forbidden to eat; God sees that Adam is lonely, decides to give him a helper and creates woman from Adam's rib while Adam is asleep. Adam calls the new creature γυνή[12] and declares her "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." The snake persuades the woman to eat from the forbidden tree; she eats and also gives some to Adam. When God confronts them with their wrongdoing, Adam blames the woman, while the woman blames the serpent. Finally God punishes all three parties, first the snake, then the woman, then Adam. God's curse to woman is pain in childbearing (ἐν λύπαις τέξῃ τέκνα) and submission to her husband (αὐτός σου κυριεύσει, 3:16).

What are particularly interesting for our purposes are the changes in interpretation which occur in the Hellenistic period. According to James Barr, no passage in the Hebrew Bible refers to this story as an explanation for sin and evil in the world.[13] But in Hellenistic times this idea was developed in biblical and near-biblical books such as the Wisdom of Solomon and 4 Ezra.[14] Interest in the figure of Eve also grew at the same time. Ben Sira is the earliest writer we know to ascribe the beginnings of sin and death to Eve.[15] He states that "from a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die" (Sir 25:24).[16] 2 Enoch also blames Eve for the introduction of death to the human race: "And while he was sleeping, I took from him a rib. And I created for him a wife, so that death might come to him by his wife" (2 En 30:16).[17]

In the different versions of the narrative *Life of Adam and Eve* the story of the fall is retold by Adam and Eve to their sons at the ends of their lives, and Eve is given much of the blame for the current state of affairs.[18] In the Greek

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[12] The woman is not called Eve until Gen 3:20.

[13] James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 6.

[14] Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality*, 17–18.

[15] Dorothy Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, vol. 209, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), 16.

[16] Quoted in Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 17.

[17] Quoted in Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 17, n. 10.

[18] The Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, and Slavonic versions with translations are collected in Gary A. Anderson and Michael E. Stone, *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999). Their date is uncertain, but the first or second century CE has been suggested. Michael E. Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period. Apocrypha,*

version, Adam accuses Eve of having brought death on the entire human race: "O Eve, What have you done to us? You have brought great wrath upon us, which is death which will rule over our entire race" (14.2). He explains to his sons how Eve was deceived:

> When God made us, me and your mother, *through whom also I die*, he gave us power to eat of every tree which is in paradise, but, concerning that one only, He charged us not to eat of it, and through this one we are to die. And the hour drew near for the angels who were guarding your mother to go up and worship the Lord, And the enemy gave it to her and she ate from the tree. You know that *I was not near her* nor the holy angels.
>
> (*L.A.E.* 7.1–2, my emphases)

Eve admits to Adam that she is the cause of the human condition of pain, illness and death: "it is on my account that this has happened to you, on my account you have these troubles" (9.2). She also worries that she will be accused as the main culprit at the resurrection: "Woe is me; if I come to the day of the Resurrection, all those who have sinned will curse me saying: 'Eve has not kept the commandment of God'" (10.2). Toward the end of the narrative Eve recounts the whole story in her own words to her children and grandchildren. Not only was she deceived into eating the fruit, it turns out that she was actually the one who opened the gates to paradise to let the snake in (19.1). Moreover, she also swore an oath to the serpent that she would give of the fruit to her husband (19.2). Before giving it to Eve, the devil tampered with the fruit, "and placed upon the fruit the poison of his wickedness—which is (the sense of) desire [τοῦτ' ἐστι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας], for it is the beginning of every sin" (19.3) In this passage we may detect a certain sexualization of the fall, as desire, if not sexual desire per se, is singled out as the cause of sin.

Philo was also immensely preoccupied with the Genesis stories and wrote several commentaries on Genesis. In *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, he explains why the serpent spoke to woman and not man:

> Woman is more accustomed to be deceived than man. For his judgment, like his body, is masculine and capable of dissolving or destroying the designs of deception; but the judgment of woman is more feminine, and because of softness she easily gives way and is taken by plausible falsehoods that resemble truth. (*QG* 1.33 [Marcus, LCL]).

Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus, 3 vols., vol. 2, The Literature of the Jewish people in the period of the Second Temple and the Talmud (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984).

In another treatise on the creation, Philo interprets the story of the fall allegorically, where woman stands for feeling, man for the rational mind and the snake represents pleasure: "and pleasure encounters and holds parley with the senses first, and through them cheats with her quackeries the sovereign mind itself," (*Creation* 165). Dorothy Sly has argued that Philo's allegory not only works on an individual level, but also serves as a social type where Adam is the prototype of man as husband, Eve the prototype of woman as wife and the snake represents lust—the dangerous temptation in the husband to listen to his wife's advice.[19] She also points out that the fall is sexualized in Philo's writings.[20] Philo pinpoints the desire for sexual intercourse as the source of all transgression:

> Love … sets up in each of them a desire [πόθον] for fellowship with the other with a view to the production of their like. And this desire begat likewise bodily pleasure [τὴν τῶν σωμάτων ἡδονήν], that pleasure which is the beginning of wrongs and violation of law. (*Creation* 152 [Marcus, LCL])

According to Daniel Boyarin, the origins of early Christian ideas about Eve are to be found in Hellenized Judaism, of which Philo is the best known representative. The ascription of a lower ontological status to women as well as the notion of the fall as a fall into sexuality can be found in Philo's work.[21]

The idea that the first transgression was sexual had several different configurations. Among the early Christians, teachers such as Tatian and Julius Cassianus taught that the tree of knowledge conveyed carnal knowledge and thus that the first transgression was Adam's union with Eve.[22] Other texts are preoccupied with the idea that the snake somehow had sexual intercourse with Eve, i.e. that Satan seduced Eve. Such notions may be found in 4 Maccabees, 2 Enoch, the *Protevangelium of James* and the *Gospel of Philip*. This idea also occurs in rabbinic literature, where several midrashim state that Eve had intercourse with Satan.[23] According to Boyarin, the rabbinic understanding denotes Eve's illicit sex as adultery, but it did not taint the *licit* union between Adam and Eve: "On the rabbinic readings, Adam had had intercourse with Eve from the beginning. Their intercourse is not associated in any way with the snake, the 'forbidden fruit.' "[24] Eve's union with the

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[19] Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 94–95.

[20] Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 109.

[21] Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel. Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), 80–82.

[22] Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

[23] E.g. *Genesis Rabbah* 18.

[24] Boyarin, *Carnal Israel. Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, 82–83.

snake will be further discussed in relation to the Pastoral Epistles (Chapter Three) and the *Acts of Andrew* (Chapter Four).

In conclusion, there seem to be several important changes in interpretations of Gen 2–3 during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. First, there is a focus on the eating of the fruit as sin and transgression: the story becomes a story of "the fall." Second, Eve is given more responsibility than Adam, and, finally, the fall is sometimes sexualized. Such interpretations of the Genesis story underscore the notion of women as more susceptible to both sin and seduction.

Both in the Pandora myth and in the story of the Garden of Eden, the introduction of woman is subsequent to the creation of man. The woman somehow constitutes a problem, whether it is her jar of sorrow and mischief or her predisposition to deception. Fertility and childbearing are more directly adressed in Genesis than in the Pandora myth, yet, as King argues, these themes may also be found in Hesiod.

Marriage for Procreation

In Greek as well as Roman sources we can read that the institution of marriage was for the procreation of children.[25] Within the Greek tradition of household management literature we find a strong concern for the procreation of children. Xenophon attributed the invention of marriage to the gods. He expressed his views on marriage in a treatise on household management, the *Oeconomicus*:

> The gods with great discernment have coupled together male and female, as they are called, chiefly in order that they may form a perfect partnership in mutual service. For, in the first place, that the various species of living creatures may not fail, they are joined in wedlock for the production of children [τεκνοποιούμενον]. (*Oec*. 7.18–19 [Marchant, LCL])

To produce children (τεκνοποιέω) for the continuation of the human race was the first and foremost purpose of marriage, according to Xenophon. Aristotle, about a hundred years later, continued this discourse on the proper management of the household. He regarded the city state, the *polis*,

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[25] Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 64; Eve D'Ambra, *Roman Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46. For Roman legal sources concerning marriage and procreation, see Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), 81–88.

as a macro-organism, consisting of many households. Household management (οἰκονομία), according to Aristotle, consisted of three relationships, between master and slave; husband and wife; and father and children:

> We ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships, I mean that of mastership [δεσποτική], that of marriage [γαμική] (there is no exact term denoting the relation uniting wife and husband), and thirdly the progenitive relationship [τεκνοποιητική] (this too has not been designated by a special name).
>
> (*Pol.* 1253b, [Rackham, LCL])

According to Aristotle, the procreation of children (τεκνοποιητική) is an essential function of a household. He recognizes three subordinate groups (slave, wife, child), all ruled by the male householder, the δεσπότης. This tripartite division of the household became extremely influential within the household management tradition and may be recognized in the New Testament and early Christian household codes (cf. e.g. Eph 5:22–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1; 1 Tim 2:8–15; 6:1–2; Tit 2:1–10; 1 Pet 2:18–3:7; Ign. *Pol.* 4–5).[26]

Aristotle was also concerned about procreation in his biological writings. In *History of Animals* he uses the same term as Xenophon, τεκνοποιέω, when he talks about a couple's ability to produce children: "It happens to many husbands and wives that they cannot produce [μὴ δύνασθαι τεκνοποιεῖσθαι] in union with each other, but can when apart from each other," (*Hist. an.* 585b [Balme, LCL]). Aristotle also uses the noun τεκνογονία (cf. 1 Tim 2:15) in the same book of *History of Animals*: "After thrice seven years the women have reached a favourable state for childbearing [τὰς τεκνογονίας], while the men continue to improve," (*Hist. an.* 582a [Balme, LCL]).

In Latin sources, the phrase "for the purpose of producing children" (*liberorum quaerendum gratia*) is frequently attested, and was, according to Beryl Rawson, probably a legal or ritual formula.[27] It has been noted that Roman legal sources emphaisized that marriage was "in accordance with natural law."[28] The *Digest* asserted that even animals were taught by nature to respect the law of marriage for procreation:

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[26] See e.g. David C. Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983); David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive. The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981).

[27] Beryl Rawson, "The Roman Family," in *The Family in Ancient Rome*, ed. Beryl Rawson (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 9. A similar formula may also have existed in Greek. See *Callirhoe*, 3.2: "You did not believe that I would consider you my wife, 'for the begetting of children' according to Greek law."

[28] Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood*, 81.

> From this follows the joining of male and female, which we call marriage, from this follows the procreation of children, and their upbringing: for indeed we see also other animals, even the wild beasts, are thought to have experienced this law. (*Digest* 1.1.1.3)[29]

Free women were expected to marry unless a religious commitment demanded celibacy. But such commitments were few and far between, exceptions to the rule of marriage, as Peter Brown has pointed out: "The presence in some cities of a handful of young girls, chosen by others to forgo marriage, heightened the awareness of contemporaries that marriage and childbirth were the unquestioned destiny of all other women."[30]

The imagery of sowing seed in fertile ground was a common way of viewing the male and female contribution of conception. The medical writers discussed complex and differing ideas about conception, as we shall see below, but the idea of woman as fertile ground was prevalent throughout the ancient Mediterranean.[31] In Aeschylus' words: "the so-called 'mother' is not a parent of the child, only the nurse of the newly-begotten embryo" (*Eum*. 658–660).[32]

Slaves and Procreation

Throughout antiquity, the institution of slavery was fundamental to the whole structuring of society. Moreover, in Greek and Roman societies, slaveholding and patriarchy were always combined. As I have argued in Chapter One, such a social organization may be called *kyriarchal*. What can the intersection of gender and slavery reveal about Greco-Roman childbearing discourse? A slave was either male or female, but the categories of man (ἀνήρ/*vir*) and woman (γυνή/*mulier*) were connected to honor, and thus incompatible with the status of a slave. Only free women could legitimately marry, and in Classical and Koiné Greek, the term γυνή was preserved for the married woman. Free Roman women similarly gained the title *matrona*

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[29] Quoted in Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood*, 81.

[30] Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 9.

[31] Økland argues that "woman as fertile soil" is one of four ancient Mediterranean gender models. Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 42–44. See also Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder. Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 62.

[32] See also Plato, *Menex*. 238a.

upon marriage.[33] Likewise, male slaves were not 'men,' in part because they did not possess the masculine quality of having an impenetrable body (sexually as well as with regard to violence).[34] In Aristotle's political system, the differences between man and woman, free and slave, Greek and barbarian, are all grounded in Nature (*Pol.* 1252a–1253a). Elisabeth Spelman has argued that this system only renders the reproductive capacity of free women politically relevant: "Though a slave may be female, what defines her function in the state is the fact of her being a slave, not the fact of her being female. Some females are meant by nature to be 'slaves,' others to be 'women,' free women."[35]

Slaves could not contract legally acknowledged marriages, but were sometimes allowed to form marriage-like bonds. Female slaves were recognized as the mother of their children, but this maternal tie held no legal ramifications. Male slaves had no claim to paternity for their offspring. Such 'families' were, moreover, always under the threat of sale or relocation that could (and often did) tear up the unit.[36]

The sexual exploitation of slaves by their masters is taken for granted in the literature of the period. A slave was regarded as a 'body' (σῶμα)[37] or, according to Aristotle, "animate piece of property" (ὁ δοῦλος κτῆμά τι ἔμψυχον, *Pol.* 1253b).[38] The sexual exploitation of such an "object" was regarded as morally neutral. Those authors who objected to the practice did so out of disapproval of the master's lack of self-restraint, not out of concern for the dignity of slave wo/men.[39] For a matron to exploit her slaves sexually was less acceptable, due to the constraints on the sexuality of freeborn women. A male slaveholder, on the contrary, could rely on his slaves to provide sexual pleasures that his wife might find shameful.[40] As sexual exclusiveness was the mark of female honor, female slaves were in a state of perpetual shame.[41] Jennifer Glancy has asked the intriguing question whether the sex-

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[33] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 46.

[34] Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, 43.

[35] Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, 42. See also Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 95–96.

[36] Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 17–18.

[37] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 10–11.

[38] My translation. Greek retreived from TLG.

[39] Richard A. Horsley, "The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars," in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation*, ed. Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley, and Abraham Smith (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 44.

[40] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 21.

[41] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 27.

ual obligations of slaves were an obstacle to their participation in the Pauline Christian community, which was thought of as the body of Christ. She argues that:

> Attention to this dimension of ancient slavery makes it impossible to maintain both that servile status was no impediment to full involvement in the Christian body *and* that within the Christian body the only sexual relations tolerated were those between husband and wife.[42]

The task of producing legitimate heirs was only for free women. Whereas a free woman's duty was to bear citizen children, slaves, whether male or female, provided for their master's daily needs.[43] Interestingly, the Hippocratic medical texts reflect this view, as (free) women's bodies were treated for problems related to reproduction while (male and female) slaves' bodies were treated for problems related to their labor.[44]

However, the lives of female slaves were in many particulars different from that of male slaves. Their sex made them especially vulnerable to violence and sexual assault and their labor was often reproductive. Even if they could not produce legitimate heirs, female slaves' reproductive capacity was still useful, as they could regenerate the slave population and thus contribute to the increased wealth of the owner. According to Roman law, a child born of a slave was a slave and belonged to her owner at the time of birth.[45] Breeding was the source of the majority of slaves and thus female slaves were unlikely to be manumitted as long as they could produce children.[46] However, slave women could be manumitted in order to marry their former owner and thus supply him with legitimate heirs.[47] Slave women also contributed indirectly to the reproductivity of their mistresses in their functions as midwives and wet-nurses.[48]

Sometimes, a female slave's economic value depended on her *not* becoming pregnant. This was the case with women who worked as prostitutes.

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[42] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 58, 70. Emphasis original.

[43] Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, 42.

[44] Nancy Demand, "Women and Slaves as Hippocratic Patients," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture. Differential Equations*, ed. Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998), 83.

[45] Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 139.

[46] Niall McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 139–140. See also Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 17.

[47] Rawson, "The Roman Family," 28.

[48] According to Flemming, slave women could serve as *medicae* (physicians) or *obstetrices* (midwives) in large households. Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 36.

In the Hippocratic treatise *Nature of the Child*, there is a description of an abortion by jumping: "A kinswoman of mine owned a very valuable singer, who used to go with men. It was important that this girl should not become pregnant and thereby lose her value" (*Nat. puer*. 13.1). Suspecting that she is pregnant, the slave alerts her mistress, who summons a doctor. The doctor orders her to kick her heels against her buttocks. After seven times "the seed flowed down upon the ground and made a noise."

Greek and Roman terminology blurred the boundaries between slaves and children. Male slaves were sometimes called παῖς/*puer* and female slaves παιδίσκη.[49] Such discursive blurring enhanced the idea that slaves were mentally like children, underdeveloped in their ability to think rationally as well as in their moral capacity.[50] Thus, in some texts from antiquity it is hard to determine whether a παῖς/*puer* or a παιδίσκη is a child or a slave.[51] Even if the context makes it clear that the character is a slave, it is an open question whether this slave is a child or an adult.[52]

The Fecundity of the Roman Empire

As noted above, descriptions of labor are rare outside the medical literature. There are, however, some epitaphs and funerary inscriptions in honor of midwives, which show the image of a woman in labor. One of these, commemorating the midwife Scribonia Attice (ca. 250 CE), depicts three women: the woman in labor is sitting in a (birthing) chair, steadied by a female assistant standing behind her and attended by the midwife sitting on a low stool in front of her. The midwife's head is turned away from the

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[49] Παῖς: "in relation to age, *child, boy* or *girl*"; "in relation to condition, *slave, servant, man* or *maid* (of all ages)," LSJ. Παιδίσκη: "*young girl, maiden*"; "*young female slave, handmaid*"; "*prostitute*," LSJ. Latin has distinct vocabulary for female slave (*ancilla*) and girl (*puella*), but male slaves were called "boy", *puer*, see OLD. This usage is reflected in slaves' names such as Lucipor or Marcipor. See Richard P. Saller, "Symbols of Gender and Status Hierarchies in the Roman Household," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture. Differential Equations*, ed. Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998), 86.

[50] James Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006), 37–44.

[51] In several NT passages it is unclear whether it is a child or a slave that is being referred to. See e.g. Matthew and John's different versions of the story of the centurion in Capernaum: Matt 8:5–13; John 4:46–53.

[52] Cornelia B. Horn and J.W. Martens, *"Let the little children come to me". Childhood and Children in Early Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 31.

birthing woman's lap, either to preserve her modesty or in order to face the viewer.[53] This terracotta relief reflects the fact that the birthing room very often was an all-female space. A number of Greek and Latin inscriptions show that women were given the titles midwife (μαία/*obstetrix*) and physician (ἰατρίνη/*medica*).[54] It was usually slave women or freedwomen who held these professions.[55] Legal sources, limiting the number of women allowed at a delivery,[56] as well as medical texts, show that women often took care of births alone.[57] For example, Soranus' *Gynecology* is written partly as a practical handbook for midwives.[58]

The appropriation of the child into society through rituals in the birthing room was the role of the head of the household (*paterfamilias*). According to Roman custom, the newborn child should be placed on the floor. The *paterfamilias*, after being informed of the child's sex, would decide whether the child should live or die. If he lifted (*tollere*) the child from the ground, this meant that the child was accepted into the family, if not, the baby would be abandoned.[59] Exposure of children was a common practice, and the dung-heap was a favored spot for slave dealers, who would rear the exposed infants and sell them as slaves.[60]

As republic became empire, the procreation of children also became a political concern. The accession of Augustus as emperor in 27 BCE brought peace and the hope of prosperity after many years of civil war. It also brought certain changes in ideas about family life and sexual propriety. Starting with Augustus, Roman emperors used legislation as a means to induce Roman citizens to marry and produce children.[61] According to Dixon, Augustus and

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[53] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 87. D'Ambra reproduces the image, which is catalogued as Tomb 100 (Ostia, Museo Ostiense). The image is also accessible at http://www.ostia-antica.org/valkvisuals/html/tombe_100_2.htm.

[54] Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 34–35. For an overview of inscriptions honoring female physicians see 383–391.

[55] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 115.

[56] Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, 52–53.

[57] Elaine M. Wainwright, *Women Healing/Healing Women. The Genderization of Healing in Early Christianity*, ed. Philip R. Davies, Bibleworld (London: Equinox, 2006), 40.

[58] Soranus divides his work into two parts dealing with (1) the midwife and (2) midwifery (*Gyn*. 1.1). Thus one might say that the first section is directed to the householder, whose job is to find a good midwife, the second towards the midwife herself.

[59] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 88; Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, Turid Karlsen Seim, and Gunhild Vidén, *Farsmakt og moderskap i antikken* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2009), 36.

[60] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 7–8.

[61] Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 71.

his literary supporters understood the civil war to have in part been a punishment from the gods due to neglect of traditional religion and morals.[62] The Augustan marriage laws (of 18 BCE and 9 CE) penalized unmarried persons over the age of 20 (for women) and 25 (for men)[63] but also rewarded women who bore children. A woman would gain *ius liberorum* if she bore three children, and was freed from the need of a legal guardian. Freedwomen obtained the same right if they had four children.[64] The goal was to raise the birth rate among the upper classes and simultaneously to control citizens' sexual behavior.[65] While married men were allowed to indulge in extramarital affairs as long as they avoided respectable women, *matronae* had no such leeway. Such behavior jeopardized their role in the production of legitimate heirs, and hence adultery (affairs with married women) was a punishable crime.[66] Divorce, however, was a common practice. By a simple notification, either partner (or his/her *paterfamilias*) could end the marriage.[67] Failure to have children (which was considered the woman's fault), political reasons and a wife's adultery were common causes of divorce.[68]

Most women in the early Empire were married *sine manu*, which meant that they remained under the legal and economic authority of their fathers.[69] The hierarchically structured *familia* was headed by the male *paterfamilias* who exercised power, *patria potestas*, over his family members.[70] First marriages were normally arranged by the parents of bride and groom. Although the consent of all parties was a principle of Roman marriage law, a girl was expected to consent unless her fiancé was shameful "or one of unworthy habits."[71] In the first century CE the legal minimum age of marriage was twelve for girls and fourteen for boys.[72] Elite girls often married in their early teens, while women from lower classes would marry in their late teens or

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62 Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 72.

63 Rawson, "The Roman Family," 9–10.

64 Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood*, 84.

65 Elaine Fantham, et al., *Women in the Classical World. Image and Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 302–303.

66 D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 48.

67 Rawson, "The Roman Family," 32.

68 Rawson, "The Roman Family," 32–33.

69 Rawson, "The Roman Family," 19.

70 Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood*, 20.

71 According to the *Digest* (23.1.12), quoted in Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire. A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood*, 89.

72 Rawson, "The Roman Family," 21.

early twenties.[73] Elite men, however, usually did not marry until they had finished their education, thus creating a typical age difference of around ten years between the spouses.[74] The age difference probably reinforced the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. In Plutarch's *Advice to Bride and Groom* we can detect this age difference as an underlying presumption. Plutarch argues that a husband should bear over with his wife early in the marriage, as she is not yet "ripe":

> Those who do not patiently put up with the early girlish disagreements are on a par with those who on account of the sourness of green grapes abandon the ripe clusters to others. (*Conj. praec.* 138e)

Given the age differential between spouses, women who survived the dangers of reproduction were likely to outlive their partners. A widow who chose not to marry, the so-called *univira*, held a position of particular esteem.[75] However, this long-standing Roman ideal came into conflict with Augustan legislation that encouraged remarriage. For elite women still in their childbearing years, the frequency of remarriage was high, thus creating a discrepancy between marital ideal and practice.[76]

In the Greek-speaking eastern Empire the general pattern of marriage and procreation was very similar to its western counterpart. Roman citizens followed Roman law wherever in the Empire they were located. The idea that the householder (δεσπότης/κύριος) ruled over his household was an idea preserved from Classical Greece (cf. Xenophon and Aristotle, discussed above). It is uncertain, however, whether the concept of *patria potestas* with its idea of total control ever gained influence, nor is it clear whether the options of marriage *sine manu* or *cum manu* ever had much meaning in the Greek East.[77]

Writings of a completely different genre, the so-called Greek novels, also display a concern for the procreation of children, first and foremost of the upper classes. There are five extant Greek novels, all probably compiled between the first and the third centuries CE.[78] These early examples of prose fiction tell stories of love and adventure that have many common traits:

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[73] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 46.

[74] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 46.

[75] Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 6.

[76] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 46; Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 22.

[77] Riet van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation. Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1996), 225–226.

[78] Reardon very tentatively dates them thus, but adds that "precise dating of the novels is impossible." "Introduction" in B.P. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1989), 5.

> Hero and heroine are always young, wellborn and handsome; their marriage is disrupted or temporarily prevented by separation, travel in distant parts, and a series of misfortunes, usually spectacular. Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance.[79]

The happy ending of these narratives is marriage. David Konstan has argued that the novels became a site for rethinking marriage and reproduction as the political climate changed from the classical and Hellenistic *polis*-structure to the "global" world of the Roman Empire.[80] Whereas marriage and household earlier were imagined in analogy with the *polis* (as in Aristotle, above), it now became a sentimental unit. Judith Perkins extends Konstan's analysis and argues that marriage is used as a trope to talk about social identity and social structures.[81] The weddings constituting the happy endings of the novels celebrated the values of the urban elite of the Greek East. The young couple represents "the traditional elite patriarchal society passing, essentially unchanged, from one generation to another."[82] Kate Cooper, similarly, argues that the prime concerns of the provincial aristocracy are reflected in the novels:

> The complicity of desire in romance would have enlisted the male reader in the renewal of the social order both symbolically, through the ideology of marriage as 'rampart of the city,' and practically, by encouraging the generation of legitimate offspring.[83]

The genre of the Greek novels seems to have influenced the production of the Apocryphal Acts, but the place of childbearing is quite different in the Apocryphal Acts. This point will be elaborated later in this chapter as well as in Chapter Four.

The emperors' concern for moral revitalization and a steady supply of citizens was encouraged not only through legislation. Starting with Augustus, the emperors created a family ideology in which the emperor was portrayed as the father of the homeland (*pater patriae*), the empress as a fertile mother and the Roman people as their children.[84] The *Ara Pacis Augustae*, the altar

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[79] "Introduction" in Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 2.

[80] David Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry. Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 226–227.

[81] Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 66.

[82] Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 75.

[83] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 23–24.

[84] Fantham, *Women in the Classical World. Image and Text*, 313.

of peace erected by the senate in honor of Augustus, is typical of the art representing Augustus' program of moral reform.[85] In one of the panels, Tellus, the earth mother, is depicted in all her fecundity, surrounded by domestic animals and stalks of grain, with fruits and babies in her lap and her swelling breasts barely covered. Motherhood is idealized in the figure of Tellus, but the woman also represents the fertility of the land, "now blooming forth without interruption due to the Augustan peace."[86] In another panel, Imperial women and children are portrayed alongside the Emperor. For the first time in Roman public art, mortal women and children are represented along with men, their presence symbolizing the fecundity and thus the dynastic continuity of the Imperial family.[87] The *Ara Pacis*, as well as other examples of imperial iconography, portrayed the women of the Imperial family in modest dress without extravagant hairdos or fancy jewelry.[88] The women in these works of art represented the virtues of *concordia* and *pietas*.[89]

The imperial childbearing propaganda was disseminated throughout the empire by means of coins, shrines, patronage of buildings, and inscriptions. Moreover, it was choreographed in ceremonies and public appearances of the court. Suetonius recounts how Augustus responded to a demand for the repeal of the marriage laws by displaying his own progeny at a public show:

> He sent for the children of Germanicus and exhibited them, some in his lap and some in their father's, intimating by his gestures and expression that they should not refuse to follow that young man's example.
>
> (*Augustus* 34.2 [Rolfe, LCL])

It also became common for imperial officials and members of the Imperial family to travel with their wives and even their children, thus constantly putting their "family values" on display.[90]

Deviant Women Don't Want Children

The Augustan drive towards fecundity and sexual propriety among the upper classes produced a discourse about deviating women. Dixon has

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[85] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 152.

[86] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 36–37.

[87] Fantham, *Women in the Classical World. Image and Text*, 295.

[88] Fantham, *Women in the Classical World. Image and Text*, 307.

[89] Judith Evans Grubbs, "Parent-Child Conflict in the Roman Family: The Evidence of the Code of Justinian," in *The Roman Family in the Empire. Rome, Italy and Beyond*, ed. Michele George (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127.

[90] Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 74.

observed that women served as symbols of decadence in some genres. It became a trope among Roman historians and epic poets to cast the current age as a degeneration from the "good old days." While women of the writers' own time were accused of leading luxurious and promiscuous lives, the great mothers of history were upheld as guardians of traditional culture and values.[91] In particular, the rejection of maternity was seen by these authors as a sign of decadence. In these writings, good women are not usually discussed in sexual terms, while bad women are almost always sexualized.[92] Seneca represents this trope in his *Consolation to his mother*. Here he praises his mother as an ideal woman who has borne children and always dressed modestly, and contrasts her to most other women, who, according to him, are promiscuous and try to evade the role of motherhood:

> Unchastity, the greatest evil of our time, has never classed you with the great majority of women; jewels have not moved you, nor pearls; to your eyes the glitter of riches has not seemed the greatest boon of the human race; you, who were soundly trained in an old-fashioned and strict household, have not been perverted by the imitation of worse women that leads even the virtuous into pitfalls; you have never blushed for the number of your children, as if it taunted you with your years, never have you, in the manner of other women whose only recommendation lies in their beauty, tried to conceal your pregnancy as if an unseemly burden, nor have you ever crushed the hope of children that were being nurtured in your body; you have not defiled your face with paints and cosmetics; never have you fancied the kind of dress that exposed no greater nakedness by being removed.
>
> (*Helv*. 16.3–4 [Basore, LCL])

Seneca makes a connection between immodest dress and cosmetics on the one side, and sexual irresponsibility on the other. In his mother, Seneca finds the valuable female virtue of modesty (*pudicitia*, *Helv*. 16.5), whereas he connects concern for looks with sexual licentiousness and even abortion. Writers such as Ovid (*Amores* 2.14) and Juvenal (6.592–601) also make moralizing comments about women who seek abortion and associate this with adultery and vanity.[93] Soranus, a medical writer, describes the medical debate about abortion which reflects some of the same concerns and suspicions. He explains that some medical practitioners denied the prescription of abortifacients with reference to the Hippocratic oath, while others *did*

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[91] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 56.
[92] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 43.
[93] Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 94–95.

prescribe it, but with some restrictions: "they do not prescribe them when a person wishes to destroy the embryo because of adultery or out of consideration for youthful beauty" (*Gyn*. 1.60). The concern about abortion was less about the value of the life of the embryo than a concern about or fear of women controlling their own fertility. The householder could regulate the size of his household through many means such as through infant exposure or by having sexual relations with other persons than his wife. He might even ask a physician to prescribe contraceptives or abortifacients to his wife. The householder also controlled the fertility of his female slaves, as already noted. According to Rebecca Flemming, abortion was deemed problematic in one instance only:

> When it became a woman's means to obstruct a man's acquisition of legitimate heirs and pursue instead her own priorities, most dangerously (and characteristically in the eyes of the moralists) adultery and vanity.[94]

The ideal for free women, then, was to assume the role of motherhood and produce legitimate heirs. Any deviation from this role could be met with accusations about sexual degeneracy and un-womanly behavior. A part of this discourse was the debate over whether women should breastfeed their own children. Most women of the lower classes nursed their own babies; the hiring of wet-nurses was the privilege of affluent matrons.[95] A pseudepigraphical letter attributed to Myia, the daughter of Pythagoras, reflects this upper-class practice:[96]

> Myia to Phyllis: Greetings.
>
> I am giving you advice on children, as you have become a mother. Choose a nurse who is most friendly and clean, and moreover modest and not disposed to sleep or drunkenness. For a woman of this kind would best judge how to raise free-born children, if she has nutritious milk and is not easily won over to her husband's bed. For the nurse has an important role in raising the child well, laying the foundations for its whole life.[97]

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[94] Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 169.

[95] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 106–107.

[96] According to Plant, the treatise is probably from the third or second century BCE, and advocates key Pythagorean concepts such as moderation and balance. I.M. Plant, *Women Writers of Ancient Greece and Rome. An Anthology* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 79.

[97] English translation from Plant, *Women Writers of Ancient Greece and Rome. An Anthology*, 79–80.

Many elite Roman men, however, criticized the practice and advised that the mother should breastfeed.[98] Pseudo-Plutarch, in "The Education of Children," points to breastfeeding as the only role of the mother in the education (*paideia*) of the child. Still, the writer is aware that not all women breastfeed:

> But if they are unable to do this, either because of bodily weakness (for such a thing can happen) or because they are in haste to bear more children …, yet foster-mothers and nurse-maids are not to be selected at random, but as good ones as possible must be chosen; and first of all, in character they must be Greek. (*The Education of Children* 3e [Babbitt, LCL])

Appropriately, within this paradigm of fecundity, it is a legitimate excuse not to breastfeed if the woman wants to become pregnant again immediately.

Notwithstanding this cultural privileging of marriage and childbearing in the Greco-Roman world, sexual renunciation as a way of life was embraced by both men and women in ancient Judaism and early Christianity. The pursuit of life-long celibacy distinguished Jewish (e.g. within the Qumran community and the Therapeutae) and early Christian practitioners from their pagan counterparts, who favored sexual restraint rather than perpetual abstinence.[99] The ascetic practices of some early Christians, including sexual renunciation, were "one of the important characteristics of the early Christian movement."[100] Early Christian asceticism is a vast topic. I will limit myself to some aspects of early Christian sexual renunciation that are particularly interesting from the perspective of Greco-Roman childbearing discourse.

Sexual renunciation took on many different forms within early Christianity.[101] Paul serves as an early witness to the ideal of virginity as a higher calling, but still allows for marriage as an approved way of life for believers (1Cor 7). His call to continence was eschatologically motivated.[102] Paul never mentions procreation as a good in itself. He values celibacy over marriage but allows for marriage only as a protection against desire for those

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[98] See e.g. Tacitus, *Germania* 20; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 12.1.17.

[99] Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, 141–144.

[100] Clark, *Reading Renunciation. Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, 16.

[101] See Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*.

[102] James E. Goehring, "Asceticism" in Everett Ferguson, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, Second ed. (New York: Garland, 1998), 128.

who lack self-control.[103] A strong undercurrent of eschatologically motivated asceticism may also be found in Luke-Acts. Turid Karlsen Seim has argued that Luke, in a situation where the postponement of the eschaton has been accepted, introduces sexual abstinence as a proleptic realization of the angelic life of the resurrection where one "neither marries nor is given in marriage" (cf. Luke 20:27–36).[104]

In some of the Apocryphal Acts, sexual renunciation seems to be at the heart of the apostle's gospel. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the apostle persuades the king's daughter and her groom on their wedding night to "refrain from this filthy intercourse" (*Acts Thom.* 12). His teaching is ridiculed as essentially implying "that no man should cohabit with his wife, and he reverses what nature demands and the deity has ordered" (*Acts Thom.* 96). The conflict between an apostle preaching continence and a society concerned with marriage and childbearing is also central in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Paul proclaims "the discourse of viriginity" and offers blessings for "the bodies of the virgins, for they shall be well pleasing to God and shall not lose the reward of their chastity" (*Acts Paul* 6–7). Thecla's mother, on the other hand, is enraged and even demands the death of her own daughter who has broken with her fiancé and converted: "burn her who will not marry in the midst of the theatre, that all the women who have been taught by this man may be afraid" (*Acts Paul* 20). As noted in the Introduction, the *Acts of Andrew*, too, preaches celibacy to the female convert (e.g. *Acts Andr.* 16; 37). These texts promote and privilege life-long sexual renunciation. It has been argued that these texts should be considered Encratite, that is, that they promoted strict continence as a precondition for salvation.[105] In order to make such an assessment, however, each text must be studied individually, as I propose to do in the case of *Acts of Andrew* in Chapter Four.[106]

Women who devoted themselves to ascetic practices were sometimes described as "becoming male," and took on a highly symbolic role as representatives of a different and better order of women. Virginity was regarded as a step in the direction of masculinity and *virtus*, as a (partial) overcoming

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[103] Teresa M. Shaw, "Sex and Sexual Renunciation," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 214.

[104] Seim, *The Double Message. Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*, 217–218.

[105] Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 97–102.

[106] Sexual renunciation seems less central in the *Acts of John* and the *Acts of Peter*. Note, however, John's reference to his own chastity (*Acts John* 113) and the story of Peter's virgin daughter (preserved in a Coptic fragment, Cod. Berol. 8502.4).

of female passion and passivity. Some Hellenistic Jewish texts in particular connect virginity and maleness.[107] In Philo's description of a group of ascetic women, the *Therapeutrides*, he links virginity and a male pursuit of wisdom. According to Sly, Philo differentiates between παρθένος and γυνή as the primary terms to distinguish virginity from womanhood. Virginity is connected with freedom from the passions and associated with the prepubertal and post-menopausal stages in a woman's life. It represents escape from the bondage of the body, in particular the defilement of menstrual blood.[108] Kerstin Aspegren has traced the tradition of the "male woman" from Plato to Methodius, and argues that Philo's exegesis, building on Platonic anthropology, lies at the root of early Christian concepts of male and female.[109] Some early Christian texts continue this tradition of connecting virginity and the ascetic pursuit of salvation with manliness.[110]

Not all texts make the connection between masculinity and virginity explicit, however. Although the *Gospel of Thomas* is considered to be ascetic,[111] logion 114 does not make the connection:

> Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said: "Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she too may become a living male spirit, similar to you." (But I say to you): "Every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."
>
> (*Gos. Thom.* 114)

Jesus here speaks of Mary and other women aspiring to "the kingdom of heaven" in terms of masculinity. The text draws a link between salvation and "becoming male," but there are no references to virginity or sexual continence. Perpetua, too "becomes male," although she is a young mother who has not (explicitly) renounced sexuality. Antti Marjanen argues that

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[107] E.g. in Philo's works and in *Joseph and Aseneth*. Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 18–19; Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, 110–115.

[108] Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 71–72.

[109] Kerstin Aspegren, *The Male Woman. A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*, ed. René Kieffer (Stockholm: Alqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 14.

[110] See e.g. Elizabeth A. Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," in *Body Guards*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991); Kari Vogt, "'Becoming Male': A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor," in *The Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995); Aspegren, *The Male Woman. A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*.

[111] Stephen J. Patterson, James M. Robinson, and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *The Fifth Gospel. The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 59.

there are variations in the use of gender transformation language in early Christianity. In the martyrdom narratives the achievement of masculinity is not linked to sexual renuncation or any other form of spiritual progress but "has to do with the successful endurance of martyrdom."[112]

Alongside the notion of "becoming male," virgins were also described in much more feminine imagery as "brides of Christ." As Elizabeth Clark has noted, "the metaphor of 'celibate Bridegroom' enabled Christians simultaneously to valorize the institution of marriage while lauding (in a titillating manner) sexual continence."[113] Such imagery held together 'marriage' and 'celibacy' in a creative tension, and ensured that even a virgin was *someone's* wife.[114] The biblical root of the metaphor is the Song of Songs and the New Testament identification of Christ as a bridegroom/husband (e.g. Matt 22:1–14; 25:1–13; John 3:29–30; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21–33).[115] In the *Acts of Thomas*, the royal wedding is used to give a lengthy analogy between carnal versus ascetic marriage and childbearing:

> But if you obey and preserve your souls pure to God, there will be born to you living children, untouched by these hurtful things, and you will be without care, spending an untroubled life, free from grief and care, looking forward to receive that incorruptible and true marriage, and you will enter as groomsmen into that bridal chamber full of immortality and light.
>
> (*Acts Thom.* 12)

In this passage the metaphor of Christ as bridegroom is combined with the childbearing metaphor. Immortality, in this scheme, may be obtained through abstinence rather than through the procreation of mortal offspring. This type of imagery also appears in *Acts Andr.* 16 and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 18. Interestingly, it seems to complement and check the 'becoming male' metaphor.[116]

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[112] Antti Marjanen, "Male Women Martyrs: The Function of Gender-Transformation Language in Early Christian Martyrdom Accounts," in *Metamorphoses. Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 247.

[113] Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis," *Church History* 77, no. 1 (2008): 1.

[114] Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis," 2, 9.

[115] See the selection of essays on this topic in Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro, *Sacred Marriages. The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to early Christianity* (Winona, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008).

[116] See discussions in Chapters Four and Five.

A Pronatalistic Gynecology

When women are considered in the medical literature, it is first and foremost their reproductive capacity that is scrutinized. Ann Ellis Hanson states that "whether she lives in the fifth century BCE or in the first century CE, the medical writers' woman is most often assigned the role of wife and mother."[117] Despite the different and even opposing ideas that the medical writers proposed, they operated within a single and developing genre and held some ideas in common about how the female body functioned.[118] The educated elite was the primary audience for their writings.[119] In the following I will point to both differences and similarities as I discuss some aspects of gender construction, pregnancy and childbirth as treated by these medical writers.

The Greco-Roman medical discourses of the first centuries CE build on the Greek medical texts of the preceding centuries, the most influential of which are the Hippocratic Collection and Aristotle's biological writings. The Hippocratic writings constitute the beginning of Western medicine. Of the about sixty treatises, most were written between 430 and 330 BCE.[120] Most Hippocratic authors are thought to have been practicing physicians, and their theories differed from contemporary theories in other natural sciences in that their hypotheses were not speculative but were expected to be applied and proven in their treatment of the sick.[121] The medical writers within the corpus belonged to different groups and schools and in many cases represented opposing views.[122] There are ten gynecological treatises in the Hippocratic corpus. Interestingly, these texts form the largest body of homogeneous subject matter within the corpus.[123]

Aristotle, in contrast to the Hippocratic writers, was not a practicing physician but a philosopher. His interest was not clinical application but the

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117 Ann Ellis Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," in *Before Sexuality. The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, Winkler, John J and Zeitlin, Froma I. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 334.

118 Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 313.

119 Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 129.

120 G.E.R. Lloyd, "Introduction," in *Hippocratic Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1983), 9.

121 Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 7. See Nutton for the emphasis on prognosis and practical expertise. Vivian Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (London: Routledge, 2004), 89–102.

122 Lloyd, "Introduction," 10.

123 Ann Ellis Hanson, "Hippocrates: *Diseases of Women* 1. Translated and with a headnote by Ann Ellis Hanson," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 2 (1975): 586.

development of theoretical knowledge about physiology and anatomy.[124] He observed animals in their natural habitats and performed dissections on a number of species but not on humans.[125] Aristotle's works on biology were written in the second half of the fourth century BCE. It is difficult to know whether he knew specific Hippocratic treatises, but in many cases he seems to be arguing against certain Hippocratic views.[126]

During the Roman Empire, encyclopaedists such as Celsus and Pliny the Elder incorporated Greek medicine into their books.[127] Soranus and Galen were Greek physicians practicing at Rome who wrote medical treatises in the first and second centuries CE.[128] Of Soranus' writings, only his *Gynecology* is preserved. From Galen, however, more books are preserved than from any other writer from antiquity.[129]

The Hippocratic concept of 'woman' was very much concerned with blood.[130] According to the Hippocratics, the flows of blood determined whether a woman was healthy or not. Due to what was considered woman's loose-textured flesh, she would absorb more moisture than men from her diet and this surplus needed to be evacuated through menstruation.[131] If a woman did not menstruate, excess blood would collect and flow into the wrong places, and she would become sick.[132] The womb was considered the quintessential female organ, and it has been suggested that it was conceived of as a jar, positioned upside-down.[133] The womb would close at conception and remain closed through the pregnancy. Otherwise it was essential that the womb was open, so the menses could flow freely and so that the woman could receive the male seed.[134] The best way for

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124 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 18.

125 Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, 119–120.

126 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 19–20.

127 Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 130, 33.

128 Little is known about the life of Soranus. Purportedly born in Ephesus, he worked as a physician in Rome in the first quarter of the second century. Galen's life is better attested. Born at Pergamum in 129, he studied in Smyrna and Alexandria before serving as a physician in Pergamum and Rome (from 162). Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, 129, 216–224.

129 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 24.

130 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 54–55.

131 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 29.

132 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 29.

133 Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 317; King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 34–35.

134 From Hellenistic and Roman times there are uterine amulets, used in reproductive magic, that reflect this concern. Hanson argues that the uterine amulets "reflect a fear of gaping wombs." The lock depicted on these amulets is intended to close the womb for

a woman to stay healthy was to have sexual relations, as one Hippocratic author explains:

> Another point about women: if they have intercourse with men, their health is better than if they do not. For in the first place, the womb is moistened by intercourse, whereas when the womb is drier than it should be it becomes extremely contracted, and this extreme contraction causes pain to the body. In the second place, intercourse, by heating the blood and rendering it more fluid, gives an easier passage to the menses; whereas if the menses do not flow, women's bodies become prone to sickness. (*On Generation* 4)

Intercourse in itself was regarded as healthy, because it would irrigate the womb with sperm, the optimal liquid, so that it did not become desiccated and start wandering elsewhere in the body in search of moisture.[135] Pregnancy was also considered good for a woman's health. Then the surplus blood would function as nourishment for the fetus in the womb, and after birth, as milk for the baby.[136] As Hanson puts it: "for the Hippokratics, then, menstruation, intercourse, and childbirth are collectively essential to the health of the mature woman."[137] Within such a medical paradigm, virgins and widows, who did not benefit from the "treatment" of intercourse and pregnancy, were seen as more prone to sickness.[138]

For Aristotle, women's lack of heat was the central tenet. He argued that both men and women held a residue of blood which was not used up in nourishment, although it was less in males. This residue was concocted within the body, and in men turned into semen. Due to women's colder nature and the larger quantity of residue, they were unable to perform this final concoction, but produced menses instead.[139] Therefore, man is more perfect than woman:

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successful pregnancy, or to inhibit pathological flows of blood. Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 324–325. See also Gilhus, Seim, and Vidén, *Farsmakt og moderskap i antikken*, 39–44; Jane Rowlandson and Roger S. Bagnall, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt. A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 359.

135 Nancy Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 55–57. The concept of the "wandering womb" has been extensively treated by several scholars of ancient gynecology, see e.g. King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 214–234; Lesley Dean-Jones, "The Cultural Construct of the Female Body in Classical Greek Science," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 121–124; Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 318–319.

136 Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 318.

137 Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 319.

138 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 70–71.

139 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 60–61.

> Further, a boy actually resembles a woman in physique, and a woman [ἡ γυνὴ] is as it were an infertile male [ὥσπερ ἄρρεν ἄγονον]; the female [τὸ θῆλυ], in fact, is female on account of inability [ἀδυναμίᾳ] of a sort, viz., it lacks the power to concoct semen out of the final state of the nourishment (this is either blood or its counterpart in bloodless animals) because of the coldness of its nature. (*Gen. an.* 728a [Peck, LCL])

Woman, in other words, is an imperfect man, characterized by inability, as man is characterized by ability (*Gen. an.* 766a).

Soranus and Galen were less preoccupied with blood,[140] but they built on and expressly discussed many of the theories found in the Hippocratics and Aristotle. In Book III of his *Gynecology*, in which he discusses conditions contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν), Soranus starts out by asking "whether women have conditions peculiarly their own" (*Gyn.* 3.1). He positions himself within the medical discussion, arguing against Aristotle's view that "the female is imperfect, the male, however, perfect" (*Gyn.* 3.3). Soranus defines one area where men and women differ physically: "conception, parturition, and lactation [τὸ συλλαμβάνειν καὶ ἀποτίκτειν καὶ γαλακτουργεῖν]" (*Gyn.* 3.5). The ability to conceive and bear a child, give birth and breastfeed is what differentiates women from men. In contrast to the Hippocratics, Soranus was more open to the fact that pregnancy and childbirth might be harmful to women: "For pregnancy and parturition exhaust the female body and make it waste greatly away, whereas virginity, safeguarding women from such injuries, may suitably be called healthful" (*Gyn.* 1.30). Hanson understands this as a medical response to changed social mores; as women were becoming more active in public life, Soranus "permits women's reproductive lives to approximate to a much greater degree those of their menfolk" (*Gyn.* 1.30). Soranus hastily adds, however, that "intercourse seems consistent with the general principle of nature according to which both sexes, [for the sake] of continuity, [have to ensure] the succession of living beings" (*Gyn.* 1.32). Generation, apparently, is the *telos* of humankind, a "priciple of nature," and women have to play their part despite the potential injury to their health.

Galen also highlights women's capacity for childbearing as the central difference between male and female:

> For women are similar to men to the extent that they too are rational animals, that is, capable of acquiring knowledge; but to the extent that the genus of men is stronger and superior of every activity and learning and women are weaker and inferior, in this they are unlike; and again; women are opposite

[140] Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 331.

> [to men] in so far as they are female and, on account of this, adapted for childbearing [πρὸς κύησιν ἐπιτήδειαι], for women have certain parts of the body prepared for childbearing by their nature while men do not. So it is correct to say that in one respect women are similar to men, in another they are opposite.[141] (*Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* 9.3.25–26)

Galen, like Aristotle, argues that woman is an incomplete man. But women's incompleteness is, nonetheless, a great advantage to the human race. He expresses a similar sentiment to Soranus' as he marvels at the wonders of personified Nature in her invention of human reproduction:

> For there needs must be a female. Indeed you ought not to think that our Creator would purposely make half the race imperfect [ἀτελές] and, as it were, mutilated [ἀνάπηρον], unless there was to be some great advantage [χρεία μεγάλη] in such a mutilation. (*On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.2)

Woman is made mutilated by Nature herself. As she only had mortal material to work with, the creation of the reproductive organs was her best means to help humans "toward immortality." Galen cannot get around the fact that there must be a female in the generation of children, and in his view, human generation is the closest mortal beings can get to immortality. Galen follows Aristotle in his view that woman's imperfection is due to her lack of heat. As a mole has imperfect eyes, so do women have imperfect reproductive organs, he explains. Galen argues that because of women's lack of heat, their genitals are retained on the inside when they are formed in the womb. Male embryos project the genitals, which are structurally alike to the female genitals, and thus become "complete in all respects." The retention of women's reproductive organs within is, however, a great advantage:

> For, remaining within, that which would have become the scrotum if it had emerged on the outside was made into the substance of the uteri, an instrument fitted to receive and retain the semen and to nourish and perfect the fetus. (*On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.6)

Galen and Aristotle's argumentation about the likeness yet imperfection of female sexual organs compared to the male is important for Laqueur's one-sex model. As noted in Chapter One, Laqueur's model has been very influential in studies of antiquity. Laqueur has, however, been criticized by feminist historians of antiquity who argue that the one-sex model may not have been hegemonic in antiquity. King has pointed out that the model is

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[141] Quoted in Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 358.

not reflected in much of the Hippocratic corpus. The gynecological treatises assume that women are entirely different creatures from men in the texture of their flesh and in their physiological functions, not that women are cold men.[142] For example, in the Hippocratic treatise *Diseases of Women 1*, it is asserted that "a woman's flesh is more spongelike and softer than man's" and that "a woman has warmer blood and therefore she is warmer than a man" (*Diseases of Women 1* 1.25; 40). According to King, from the second quotation "it is equally possible to argue that women in general may be the hotter sex."[143] Thus, King argues that this Hippocratic model is similar to the modern model (which Laqueur claims did not develop until the late eighteenth century) in which the "sexuality of the body was thought to extend to all its parts, including the mind."[144]

Another critical voice is Flemming, who argues that not even Galen can be taken to represent the one-sex model in all his texts. The Galen-passage from *Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* quoted above "clearly contradicts Laqueur's vision of the hegemonic, ancient one-sex model, with its privileging of role over body."[145] Flemming agrees with Laqueur that there is a fundamental hierarchy between male and female in Galen's world. Still, Galen's view of woman is not entirely consistent, she argues, and at times sexual difference seems to boil down to the fact that woman has a womb and breasts.[146] Finally, Jorunn Økland has argued that Laqueur's model is an oversimplification and that ancient gender discourse was "much messier, which made it possible for the participants to draw on many conflicting and converging gender models at the same time."[147] It seems to be precisely when it comes to childbearing that sexual difference is considered exclusively, as either male or female, in the medical texts.[148]

The one-sex model captures an important aspect of Greco-Roman gender discourse, namely the idea of hierarchy and continuum. But as these feminist scholars of ancient medicine and culture have shown, the one-sex

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142 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 11.

143 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 32.

144 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 11.

145 Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 357.

146 Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 356.

147 Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 40.

148 See Petersen, who makes a similar assessment. Petersen, "Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," 232 n. 17.

model competed with other models that were more clearly based on difference. In other words, we may also posit a two-sex model, and perhaps there are even others. Texts from antiquity may reflect influence from one or both of the models, and an author may employ notions from one or the other according to his (or her) purposes.[149]

The details of conception and human reproduction were also matters of debate among the medical writers. The Hippocratics held that conception required both male and female seed, while Aristotle, on the other hand, claimed that woman does not contribute seed in conception. Woman's only contribution to generation was the menstrual fluid, according to him.[150] Aristotle likens semen and blood: woman's contribution is to provide fertile ground where the male seed might grow. While Aristotle and Soranus denied the contribution of female seed, the Hippocratics and Galen supported this idea.[151] But why, if women produce seed, can they not reproduce parthenogenetically—without a man? The Hippocratics do not give one single answer to that question. According to Lesley Dean-Jones, they had difficulty explaining why, but one treatise suggests that semen from only one party is simply not enough.[152] For Galen, the difference lies in the fact that the male seed carries the *pneuma*, and is perfect, as opposed to female seed, which is imperfect. In his description of what happens at the moment of conception, the *pneuma* of the male semen is the active principle orchestrating everything:

> Whenever the fluid of the semen, borne by the innate pneuma, encounters the tunics of the uteri, it readily adheres like grease … and the pneuma, perfectly preserved in this on all sides and not dissipated, goes about beginning the movements natural to it. (*On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.3)

Such theoretical speculation was, however, counteracted by the very practical concern for pregnant and parturient women, which was also important part of ancient gynecology. As Hanson has put it, the stance was "pronatalistic;" the intention being to protect the woman's fertility and the safe birth of the child.[153] Soranus, for example, devotes most of his gynecology to these issues: the selection of a midwife; the care of a pregnant woman; issues concerning labor; and care of the newborn. He gives a detailed description of the

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149 I am grateful to Gitte Buch-Hansen for several stimulating conversations on this topic.
150 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 177.
151 Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 314–315.
152 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 161–162.
153 Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 316.

care to be given to a pregnant woman: she should avoid every excess, both physically and mentally, and follow a specified regimen of diet and baths. Sexual intercourse should be avoided:

> For just as the stomach when quiet retains the food, but when shaken often ejects through vomiting what it has received, so also the uterus when not shaken holds fast the seed; when agitated, however, discharges it.
>
> (*Gyn.* 1.46)

In the Hippocratic Collection there is a similar stress on taking it easy during pregnancy, but sexual intercourse is not discouraged. The eighth month seems to be an exception, but intercourse was encouraged for the ninth month, as it would make it easier for the baby to pass through the birth canal.[154] Aristotle, too, argued that intercourse before birth would speed up the birthing process (*Hist. an.* 584a) He also thought that the baby's sex made a difference for parturition: the delivery of a boy would go more quickly, but be harder (*Hist. an.* 584a).

The ancient medical writers agreed that women could give birth from the seventh through the tenth month of pregnancy. In the Hippocratic Collection, the eighth month is singled out as a particularly dangerous time in the pregnancy, and it was thought that the child born in this month would not live.[155] This notion became widely known and was held by many medical writers throughout the Greco-Roman era.[156] For example, Aristotle claims:

> The women suffer most during the fourth month and the eighth, and if they abort at the fourth or eighth month [ὀγδόῳ μηνί] they too perish as a rule, so that not only do the eight-month children [τὰ ὀκτάμηνα] not live but in their destruction the mothers are at risk. (*Hist. an.* 584b [Balme, LCL])

When describing the signs of imminent labor, Soranus discusses deliveries in the seventh, ninth and tenth months, but curiously fails to mention the eighth month.[157] Hanson proposes that the reason for the longevity of the belief that delivery in the eight month was dire, is that it performed a useful function in the etiquette of the birth chamber.[158] Given the high rate of infant

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[154] Aline Rousselle, *Porneia. On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 42–43.

[155] See e.g. *De octimestri partu* 6–7, 92.5–10, 92.15–22 and *De carnibus* 19, 20.25–29.

[156] Ann Ellis Hanson, "The Eight Months' Child and the Etiquette of Birth: Obsit Omen!," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 61 (1987): 591. See also Rowlandson and Bagnall, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt. A Sourcebook*, 293.

[157] Soranus, *Gynecology* 2.1: "Around the seventh or the ninth or the tenth month in women who are about to give birth, there arises a heaviness in the lower part of the abdomen."

[158] Hanson, "The Eight Months' Child and the Etiquette of Birth: Obsit Omen!," 591.

and maternal mortality at the time, the belief in the bad omen of an eighth month delivery became a useful explanation when things went wrong. The conviction exonerated birth attendants from charges of negligence and relieved parents from feelings of guilt: "it was useful in the face of the tragedy of infant death for all to agree that the eight months' child does not survive."[159] The notion of the eight months' child is also reflected outside medical texts, for example in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, and in authors such as Philo and Tertullian.[160]

In the Hippocratic treatises, the child was regarded as the active element in the birth process, while the woman remained passive.[161] According to the *Nature of the Child*, childbirth was initiated by the child when it had exhausted the supply of nutrition in the womb. Thus becoming restless, it would move about vigorously, break the membranes holding it in place and work its way out like a chicken hatching an egg (*Nat. puer*. 30.1–9). According to Soranus, the birthing woman should be advised to use her breath and strain during contractions (*Gyn*. 2.3). Whether this would effectively help in driving the baby out, or was only considered a precaution against complications, is unclear.

Whereas most of the medical writers were male, it has been pointed out that women were often treated by female practitioners for the sake of modesty.[162] Especially at childbirth, as already noted, the woman in labor was usually assisted by women, either a professional midwife or experienced women in the family.[163] Only if there was a complication would a male physician have been present.[164] Treatment by professional physicians may also have been a privilege exclusive to elite women, or to slave women whose reproductive health was valuable to their owners, as we saw in the Hippocratic reference to the abortion performed on a slave prostitute. Women of lesser means probably sought healing elsewhere, for example through religious practice, performance of magic and folk medicine.[165]

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[159] Hanson, "The Eight Months' Child and the Etiquette of Birth: Obsit Omen!," 600.

[160] See *M. Perp. and Fel.* 15.5, Philo, *Creation* 124, Tertullian, *The Soul* 37. The notion of the eighth month's child will be discussed further in Chapters Five and Six.

[161] Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece*, 19.

[162] Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women. Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen*, 35–36; Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece*, 63.

[163] Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 34–35; D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 86.

[164] *Gyn*. 4.7. For the same pattern in the Hippocratic corpus, see Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 35.

[165] See e.g. Helen King, "Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women," in *Sexuality and*

Even if a baby was born alive, it might not be fit to live. Soranus gives detailed advice on "how to recognize the newborn that is worth rearing":

> Now the midwife, having received the newborn, should first put it upon the earth, having examined beforehand whether the infant is male or female … She should also consider whether it is worth rearing or not. And the infant which is suited by nature for rearing will be distinguished by the fact that its mother has spent the period of pregnancy in good health … Second, by the fact that it has been born at the due time, best at the end of nine months, and if it so happens, later; but also after seven months. Furthermore by the fact that it is perfect in all its parts, members and senses …; that it has due size and shape and is properly sensitive in every respect … And by conditions contrary to those mentioned, the infant not worth rearing is recognized. (*Gyn*. 2.6)

Note that in this passage, too, Soranus omits reference to the eighth month. An infant fit to live is born either after seven months or at the end of nine months.

The children worth rearing needed to be fed, and discussions of wet-nursing covered medical as well as moral concerns, as noted above. Among the medical writers, both the Hippocratics and Aristotle believed that the mother's milk was the ideal food for the baby.[166] Soranus, on the other hand, did not. In his opinion, the mother's milk right after birth was not wholesome, since it was produced by an agitated body. Therefore it would be "absurd to prescribe the maternal milk" to the newborn (*Gyn*. 2.17). Rather than giving the newborn the breast immediately, it should be given to a wet-nurse or be fed goat's milk or honey water. Later on, the mother might be considered as provider of milk, but only if she "shows the attributes characteristic of the best nurses" (*Gyn*. 2.18). He goes on to give detailed descriptions of the ideal wet-nurse's bodily features as well as moral dispositions:

> One should choose a wet nurse not younger than twenty nor older than forty years, who has already given birth twice or thrice, who is healthy, of good habitus, of large frame, and of good color. Her breasts should be of medium size, lax, soft and unwrinkled, the nipples neither big nor too small and neither too compact nor too porous and discharging milk overabundantly. She should be self-controlled, sympathetic and not ill-tempered, a Greek, and tidy. (*Gyn*. 2.19)

Gender in the Classical World, ed. Laura McClure (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Wainwright, *Women Healing/Healing Women. The Genderization of Healing in Early Christianity*; Gilhus, Seim, and Vidén, *Farsmakt og moderskap i antikken*, 41–43.

166 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 222.

This quotation reflects many of the same ideas as the Pythagorean letter to Phyllis, quoted above, that a wet-nurse should be morally sound as well as physically healthy.

Greco-Roman gynecology was pronatalistic. As Hanson has argued, the intent of the medical writers was to protect woman's fertility, and their concern was "product-oriented." The product was "an heir for the household who projects the family into the next generation."[167] Thus, we recognize the medical discourse as part of the wider Greco-Roman childbearing discourse, where the reproduction of the family and of the state is a central concern.

Childbearing Imagery

In the real world only women bear children. But myth and metaphor open up the discursive possibility that men, too, might be pregnant and give birth. According to Nancy Demand, "the metaphor of male pregnancy was an especially productive one in Greek thought."[168] Both in Greek philosophy and in the New Testament, we find examples of childbearing imagery. Zeus, for example, himself gives birth to Athena from his own head, although he has to swallow his pregnant wife Metis to achieve this.[169] The appropriation of childbearing by men is nowhere more clearly delineated than in Plato. In several of the Socratic dialogues, Plato likens the intellectual awakening process achieved through philosophical discourse to the experience of childbearing. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates diagnoses his student: "Yes, you are suffering the pangs of labour [ὠδίνεις], Theaetetus, because you are not empty, but pregnant [ἐγκύμων]."[170] Socrates explains to Theatetus that he is a midwife like his mother, Phaenarete (149a). But Socrates' midwifery is more important, because his patients sometimes bring forth real children and sometimes mere images. Accordingly, he must have the ability to discern between the fake and the real (150a–b). Furthermore, his art is practiced upon men and their souls rather than upon women and their bodies (150b). Being a midwife for men is, then, both a more challenging task and a more elevated one.

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[167] Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 316.

[168] Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece*, 134.

[169] *Hymn 3 to Apollo* 323, Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 31.

[170] Plato, *Theatetus* 148e, (Fowler, LCL).

The metaphor of birth also occurs in Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*, where he relates a conversation he had with the wise woman Diotima about love (*eros*). Diotima of Mantinea likens the (male) pursuit of *eros* with conception and childbearing. To love is "begetting on a beautiful thing by means of both body and soul" (206b), explains Diotima to Socrates:

> 'Let me put it more clearly,' she said. 'All men are pregnant [κυοῦσι], Socrates, both in body and in soul; on reaching a certain age our nature yearns to beget [τίκτειν]. This it cannot do upon an ugly person, but only on the beautiful: the conjunction [συνουσία] of man and woman is a begetting [τόκος] for both. It is a divine affair, this engendering and bringing to birth [ἡ κύησις καιἡ γέννησις], an immortal element in the creature that is mortal; and it cannot occur in the discordant. The ugly is discordant with whatever is divine, whereas the beautiful is accordant. Thus Beauty presides over birth [τῇ γενέσει] as Fate and Lady of Travail [Εἰλείθυια]; and hence it is that when the pregnant [τὸ κυοῦν] approaches the beautiful it becomes not only gracious but so exhilarated, that it flows over with begetting and bringing forth [διαχεῖται καὶ τίκτει]; … Therefore when a person is big and teeming-ripe he feels himself in a sore flutter for the beautiful, because its possessor can relieve him of his heavy pangs [μεγάλης ὠδῖνος].' (*Symp*. 206c–e [Lamb, LCL])

What love desires is immortality (207a), the regeneration of the self, which can be achieved through mortal children (male-female reproduction) or through the philosophic pursuit of virtue (by way of a pederastic male-male relationship). The latter is the higher form, as it results in a pregnancy of soul rather than of body (209a). It has been pointed out that Diotima's vocabulary conflates sexual and reproductive activity.[171] Both attraction/orgasm and pregnancy/birth are invoked simultaneously. Through this conflation the pederastic pursuit of beautiful young men becomes reproductive, as the following quotation makes clear:

> Hence it is the beautiful rather than the ugly bodies that he welcomes in his pregnancy [κυῶν], and if he chances also on a soul that is fair and noble and well-endowed, he gladly cherishes the two combined in one; and straightway in addressing such a person he is resourceful in discoursing of virtue and of what should be the good man's character and what his pursuits; and so he takes in hand the other's education. For I hold that by contact with the fair one and by consorting with him he bears and brings forth [ἐκύει τίκτει] his long-felt conception. (*Symp*. 209c [Lamb, LCL])

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[171] David M. Halperin, "Why is Diotima a Woman?," in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*, ed. David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1990), 140.

The pederastic pursuit of beauty in a single body is, however, only a stepping stone to the more elevated, philosophical pursuit of Beauty:

> From observances he should be led on to the branches of knowledge, that there also he may behold a province of beauty, and by looking thus on beauty in the mass may escape from the mean, meticulous slavery of a single instance, … and turning rather to the main ocean of the beautiful may by contemplation of this bring forth [τίκτῃ] in all their splendour many fair fruits of discourse and meditation in a plenteous crop of philosophy.
>
> (*Symp*. 210c–d [Lamb, LCL])

Vigdis Songe-Møller argues that Plato constructs philosophy as masculine reproduction. 'True' birth is found in genuine philosophical activity. This discourse, however, is preconditioned by a "radical homo-eroticism."[172] It has also been pointed out that by reserving 'true' or 'higher' birthing to men, such discourse devalues female birthing: "Women were considered capable only of giving birth to other females and to incomplete males whose masculinization men must complete through a rebirthing process."[173]

The Hellenistic Jewish writer Philo builds on Plato's childbearing imagery,[174] but according to him women too can bear metaphorical children. In *On the Contemplative Life*, he describes the women in the ascetic group of *Therapeutae*, the *Therapeutrides*, by likening their (virginal) pursuit of wisdom with marriage and childbearing:

> The feast is shared by women [γυναῖκες] also, most of them aged virgins [γηραιαὶ παρθένοι], who have kept their chastity [ἁγνείαν] not under compulsion, … but of their own free will in their ardent yearning for wisdom [ζῆλον καὶ πόθον σοφίας]. Eager to have her for their life mate [συμβιοῦν] they have spurned the pleasures of the body [τῶν περὶ σῶμα ἡδονῶν] and desire no mortal offspring [θνητῶν ἐκγόνων] but those immortal children which only the soul that is dear to God can bring to the birth [τίκτειν] unaided because the Father has sown in her [σπείραντος εἰς αὐτὴν] spiritual rays enabling her to behold the verities of wisdom. (*Contempl. Life* 68 [Colson, LCL])

According to this imagery, women who have chosen to live as virgins, and thus have forgone the possibility of becoming mothers of mortal children, live their lives in analogy to childbearing women but on a higher plane. The image of impregnation and childbearing of the soul is employed only when Philo speaks about the female initiates, not in relation to the male *therapeutae*. By ascribing to these celibate women the role of mother, he

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172 Songe-Møller, *Philosophy Without Women. The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, 112.
173 Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece*, 139.
174 Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 135–136.

enables them to fulfill the domestic role of a good woman, according to Jewish as well as Greco-Roman norms.[175] Nevertheless, by renouncing sexuality and yearning for wisdom, they are similar to male philosophers; they have, in a fashion, become male.[176] They bear children in their souls, like Plato's pederastic philosophers, since they are elevated above the female form of begetting, which takes place in the body. In Philo's world, however, it is not the philosopher teacher but God who is the begetter; it is the divine who sows seeds in the soul.[177] In another work, *On the Cherubim*, he elaborates on this image:

> Man and woman, male and female of the human race, in the course of nature come together to hold intercourse [ὁμιλίας] for the procreation of children. But virtues whose offspring [τικτούσαις] are so many and so perfect may not have to do with mortal man, yet if they receive no seed of generation [γονήν] from another they will never of themselves conceive [κυήσουσι]. Who then is he that sows [ὁ σπείρων] in them good seed [τὰ καλά] save the Father of all, that is God unbegotten and begetter [γεννῶν] of all things?
>
> (*Cherubim* 43–44 [Babbitt, LCL])

God is the male principle who sows his seed in his devout followers' souls. Both male and female philosophers are thus feminine in relation to God, since they are in the female position of passively receiving, submissively accepting divine wisdom.[178]

Plutarch, too, includes women in his notion of philosophical childbearing. He uses the image of childbearing to describe what goes on in a marriage where the husband instructs the wife in philosophy. Thus, the reproductive relationship between husband and wife takes place on two levels simultaneously, on the biological as well as on a philosophical level. It is, however, essential that the male sows the seed. Drawing on insights from Greco-Roman medical theory, he explains:

> It is said that no woman ever produced a child without the co-operation of a man, yet there are misshapen, fleshlike, uterine growths originating in some infection, … commonly called "moles." Great care must be taken that this sort

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[175] Joan E. Taylor, "The Women "Priests" of Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*: Reconstructing the Therapeutae," in *On the Cutting Edge. The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York: Continuum, 2004), 111.

[176] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, 114.

[177] Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, 136. See e.g. *Cherubim* 42–48; *Alleg. Interpr*. 3.219.

[178] See also *Alleg. Interpr*. 3.180, where he develops the notion that the soul has a womb into which God may implant virtues so that the soul brings forth what is good.

> of thing does not take place in women's minds. For if they do not receive the seed of good doctrine [λόγων χρηστῶν σπέρματα] and share with their husbands in intellectual advancement [κοινωνῶσι παιδείας τοῖς ἀνδράσιν], they, left to themselves, conceive [κυοῦσι] many untoward ideas and low designs and emotions. (*Conj. praec.* 145d–e [Colson, LCL])

For Plutarch it is of great importance that it is the male who sows the seed. That is, it is the husband who must implant the philosophical instruction in the wife and not the other way around. Without male guidance, a woman is just as unable to conceive ideas as she is to produce human offspring. In all these images of childbearing, the focus is on conceiving and birthing ideas in the soul. The philosophical "childbearer" can in some cases be a woman, but the begetter, whether human or divine, is always male.[179]

Images of childbearing can also be found several places in the New Testament, and seems to be drawn on for several different purposes. Karlsen Seim has shown how this imagery is drawn upon in apocalyptic texts.[180] In Mark 13:8 (par. Matt 24:8) Jesus warns the crowd: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs [ὠδίνων]." Paul also uses this imagery to express the terror of the last days: "When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains [ἡ ὠδίν] come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!" (1 Thess 5:3). Seim argues that the imagery has Jewish roots and is used either (1) to express the unexpected terror and pain that will come as punishment for the wicked, or (2) the pain that will precede the coming of the Messiah, when the just will be redeemed. In these images the woman almost disappears in the cosmic dimensions of the labor pains.[181]

The Christ-believing community can also be descrived as a woman in labor:

> When a woman is in labor [τίκτῃ], she has pain [λύπην], because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish [θλίψεως] because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain [λύπην] now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. (John 16:21–22)

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[179] Another text that draws heavily on this imagery is the Nag Hammadi treatise *Exegesis on the Soul*. See Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth. Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul*.

[180] Turid Karlsen Seim, "Smerte og forløsning: Nytestamentlige fødselsbilder i spenningen mellom virkelighet og ritualisert utopi," *Norsk teologisk tidsskrift* 91, no. 2 (1990).

[181] Seim, "Smerte og forløsning: Nytestamentlige fødselsbilder i spenningen mellom virkelighet og ritualisert utopi," 88–90.

> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains [συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει] until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly [στενάζομεν] while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom 8:22–23)

The happiness and joy after the tribulation come better into view in these passages. The reward awaiting the believing community after the tribulations is just like a mother's post-natal bliss, when she receives the newborn into her arms. The reference to adoption in Paul's image may indicate that the community has similarities with both birthing mother and newborn child.

Paul also describes himself as being in labor pains, struggling to give birth to the Galatian community: "My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth [ὠδίνω] until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19). Here, too, as in the apocalyptic use of the imagery, the pain is foregrounded. But there is a nurturing aspect as well, since neither mother nor child is lost sight of. The image of nursing and feeding the baby milk is also used by Paul to the same effect: "I fed you with milk [γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα], not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food" (1 Cor 3:2). The image of the community as suckling infants is also used in 1 Pet 2:2–3 and Heb 5:12–13, but here it is not so clear who it is that provides the milk.[182] Paul, however, seems to liken himself to a breastfeeding mother (cf. Gal 4:19) or a wet-nurse. These usages of childbearing and breastfeeding imagery may be seen in connection with the use in Greek philosophy, where education, *paideia*, was thought to start with breast-feeding. On the other hand, they differ in that the stress is on the female experience of pain, and subsequently on love and concern for the offspring. Moreover, the male begetter is not thematized in these images.

The Greek notion of childbearing in the soul is closer at hand in John's idea of being "born from above" (John 3), where birth from a mother needs to be complemented by birth of water and spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God.[183] It has been argued that birthing imagery is important for the overall theology of the fourth gospel, with John 19:34 as the pivotal

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[182] 1 Pet 2:2–3: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

Heb 5:12–13: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness."

[183] See Turid Karlsen Seim, "Descent and Divine Paternity in the Gospel of John: Does the Mother Matter?," *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): esp. 364, 75.

point.[184] As Jesus hangs on the cross, some soldiers approach to break his legs in order to speed up the death process. They realize that he is already dead: "Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side [λευράν] with a spear, and at once blood and water came out." Seim has argued that images of birth flow as a strong current throughout the Johannine gospel. In connection with Jesus' death and resurrection, John uses birthing categories in order to express how the new birth from above takes place, and verse 34 depicts the crucifixion as an act of birthing.[185] Such an image does not necessarily imply that God is female, but is rather a patriarchal appropriation of birth.[186]

John 19:34 has, since the early patristic period, "been understood to symbolize the moment of birth for the sacramental life of the church."[187] The piercing of the side was seen to reflect the birth of Eve from Adam's side, while water and blood—the liquids of parturition—represented the baptismal and Eucharistic elements.[188] The notion of baptism as a rebirth became a common way to conceptualize the ritual in early Christianity (see e.g. Tit 3:5).[189] Increasingly, from the second century onwards, this imagery is applied to the Church as birthing mother: "her prolific womb is the source of life, her parturition is painless and unending, and her breasts are infinitely lactating."[190]

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184 In addition to Sawyer and Seim, quoted below, see also Adeline Fehribach, "The 'Birthing' Bridegroom: The Portrayal of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," in *A Feminist Companion to John*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003). For a somewhat different interpretation of John's birthing imagery, see Gitte Buch-Hansen, *"It Is the Spirit that Gives Life". A Stoic Understanding of Pneuma in John's Gospel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 202–204, 301–304.

185 Seim, "Smerte og forløsning: Nytestamentlige fødselsbilder i spenningen mellom virkelighet og ritualisert utopi," 92–94.

186 Turid Karlsen Seim, "Motherhood and the Making of Fathers in Antiquity: Contextualizing Genetics in the Gospel of John," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions. Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Paul A. Holloway, and James A. Kelhoffer, *WUNT* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 118. See also Sawyer for a similar critique. Deborah Sawyer, "John 19.34: From Crucifixion to Birth, or Creation?," in *A Feminist Companion to John, Volume II*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 134.

187 Sawyer, "John 19.34: From Crucifixion to Birth, or Creation?," 130.

188 Sawyer, "John 19.34: From Crucifixion to Birth, or Creation?," 130–131.

189 Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs. The Thought World of Early Christians*, 188. See also Joseph Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology. Its origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker & van de Vegt, 1962), 130–154.

190 Robin Jensen, "*Mater Ecclesia* and *Fons Aeterna*: The Church and her Womb in Ancient Christian Tradition," in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 138.

Conclusion

This presentation of Greco-Roman discourse on childbearing shows that throughout the examined literature, women's central role is to bear children: Childbearing is the purpose of woman. Childbearing is connected to the origins of humanity as well as to its *telos*. I have shown how different genres have somewhat different emphases, but that there are nonetheless discursive threads connecting the genres—it is *one* discourse: Philosophers build on medical concepts about male and female roles in conception; the medical texts seem to rely on notions taken from creation myth; artistic depictions and novels illustrate ideas found in political and juridical documents, and so on.

In the following chapters I will look at how the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* are shaped by and contribute to this ongoing discourse on childbearing. In these three early Christian texts, statements about childbearing are connected with, or simultaneously serve as, statements about salvation. The particular ways in which this combination takes place in each of the texts will be the focus of the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

Introduction

The statement about women's salvation through childbearing (1 Tim 2:15) is the exegetical nut to crack in this chapter. After a brief introduction to the letters, I present some of the interpretations offered by scholars in the past. I seek to place the Pastoral Epistles within a broader Greco-Roman context of childbearing discourse. The importance of the household, both as a family unit and as a model for the community, is evident in these letters. I will extrapolate some of the soteriological consequences of this kyriarchal convergence of gender, class and age structures.

Date, Place, Authorship, Genre

The Pastoral Epistles are three rather short, hortatory letters addressed to individuals (Timothy and Titus) but concerned with the organization of the churches supposedly in these person's charge. In agreement with most scholars, I regard the Pastoral Epistles as post-Pauline, pseudonymous letters.[1] Dating them is difficult, but I agree with the numerous scholars who place them around the turn of the first century.[2] The text of 1 Timothy locates

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[1] For a substantial discussion of pseudepigraphy in the Pastorals, see Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986). See also the introductions in Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus* (2007); Krause, *1 Timothy*; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972). Recent commentaries in favor of Pauline authorship which will be taken into consideration are Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006); Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 2 vols., vol. 1, A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

[2] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 4; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 20; Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 364. Joanna Dewey dates them as late as 125 CE, Dewey, "1 Timothy," 353. Fiore's estimation is early: 80–90 CE. Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, 19. So is Quinn's:

the recipient in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), whereas the letter to Titus alludes to a context in Crete (1:5). These provenances, however, are most likely part of the fictional construction of Paul as sender of the letters. It is difficult to locate them more precisely than within the range of Pauline Christianity, i.e. within the geographical area of Greece, Asia Minor or perhaps Rome.[3]

It is disputed whether the three letters represent a unity and can be read together as letters with a common purpose. This debate merges with the debate on authorship. Scholars in favor of Pauline authorship tend to regard the Pastorals as individual, occasional letters and resist the common term "Pastoral Epistles."[4] Proponents of the pseudepigraphy hypothesis, on the other hand, usually insist on a closer connection among the letters.[5] Jerome Quinn argues that the letters were composed and read as a collection:

> The PE as a collection would have been received and read not as individual letters from the Paul of history but as a 'characterization' of the great apostle and his teaching for the new generation.[6]

As a collection they have "different but complementary contents and functions."[7] In my opinion the letters may be regarded as a unity. They have many stylistic, ideological and theological commonalities. For example, all three letters stress "good deeds" (ἔργα ἀγαθά, 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 1:16; 3:1, ἔργα καλά, 1 Tim 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Tit 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14) and "sound doctrine" (ὑγιαίνων λόγος, 2 Tim 1:13; 1 Tim 6:3, ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία, 1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). We find the expression πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in all three

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80–85 CE. Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and An Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, The Pastoral Epistles*, Anchor Bible Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 19.

[3] Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, 20. Young suggests Asia Minor, Quinn argues for Rome, while Bassler suggests Asia Minor or Rome, but concludes that "there is inadequate evidence to resolve the issue." Quinn, *The Letter to Titus. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and An Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, The Pastoral Epistles*, 20–21; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 20; Frances M. Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 23.

[4] E.g. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 63–64. In particular, 1 Timothy and Titus are seen as fairly similar but understood as written to separate people in separate locales, whereas 2 Tim is singled out as later, written from Rome near the end of Paul's life. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 66–67.

[5] Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, 113; Margaret Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996a), 39.

[6] Quinn, *The Letter to Titus. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and An Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, The Pastoral Epistles*, 19.

[7] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 23.

letters (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8) and all three refer to God as well as to Christ as savior (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 1:3–4; 2:10).[8] Nevertheless, they differ slightly in form. While 1 Timothy and Titus are in the form of administrative letters, 2 Timothy has a testamentary character and gives more personal exhortation.[9]

The material in the Pastorals falls into three main categories: attacks on the so-called "opponents"; instructions on proper church organization and behavior; and encouragement to the recipient to be an exemplary believer. As letters of exhortation to young communities of Christ-believers, they have a clear prescriptive focus. According to Margaret Davies, the implied reader is well versed in Jewish scriptures and accepts them as authoritative, he (the implied reader *is* male) also has a fair knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy, and is "cognizant of Paul's life and preaching."[10]

What Do Scholars Say about 1 Tim 2:15?

In the Pastorals, discourses on childbearing and salvation explicitly converge in the comment that "she will be saved through childbearing" (σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, 1 Tim 2:15). This phrase has been intensely studied and a wide array of interpretations has been offered. The lexical and grammatical problems in this verse will be dealt with later in this chapter. Let me here just sketch some of the readings scholars have offered. Some understand it as a messianic statement, referring to Mary's childbearing of Jesus. As the fall came through one woman, so did salvation, according to this interpretation.[11] Others understand it as a statement concerning women's safe delivery. The verb σῴζω has a variety of meanings, ranging from "keep from harm, bring out safely" to "save."[12] Some interpreters, then, opt for a non-theological understanding: a woman will be kept safe during the actual process of giving birth.[13] Building on this reading, Bruce Winter has

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[8] See Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 28–29, 50–51, 56–57, 74; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 3–4. These and other examples will be further developed below.

[9] Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, 8–12; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 22–23.

[10] Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 100–102.

[11] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 230. See also Porter, who gives a more extensive overview of scholars and positions than I do, Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1 Timothy 2.15)?."

[12] BDAG.

[13] Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives. Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), 118–120. Cf. also the translation in the New

suggested that the statement is a response to women among the recipients of the letter who put their health at risk by seeking abortions. The message to such a woman was that she "would be preserved by continuing in her pregnant condition."[14] Yet another suggestion is that childbearing should be understood in a metaphorical sense: the women in question should "give birth" to the virtues noted in v. 15b, faith, love, holiness and modesty.[15] It is pertinent to ask whether the aim of some of these interpretations is to elucidate the phrase or to explain it away. This passage is hermeneutically problematic for those who believe in the divine inspiration of scripture and who want to retain a soteriologically sound (Pauline) author. Many of the interpreters quoted above seem to be preoccupied with such a concern, since they deny in different ways that verse 15 is a soteriological statement.

Another rather common line of interpretation is to regard the verse as restricting salvation to within the paradigm of parenthood and the rearing of children, rather than applying a soteriological significance to childbirth per se.[16] Luke Johnson, for example, tentatively suggests: "I am inclined to think that Paul is thinking in terms of the woman's raising her children."[17] Many of these scholars reconstruct a context for the letter in which a specific situation in Ephesus (variously described) called for extraordinary measures from the letter writer. In an attempt to justify why "Paul" makes these state-

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American Standard (NAS): "*women* shall be preserved through the bearing of children." Emphasis original.

[14] Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows. The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 110–111. Towner draws heavily on Winter in his commentary, but ends up with a more general interpretation. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 234–235.

[15] See Kenneth Waters, "Saved through Childbearing: Virtues as Children in 1Timothy 2.11–15," *JBL* 123, no. 4 (2004).

[16] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 235; Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. A Commentary* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 2002), 77; Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), 68–69. Quinn and Wacker argue that the verse includes men as well as women in this soteriology through parenthood, see Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 230–234.

[17] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates. 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 134. In his later commentary, Johnson seems to skirt the question. He reviews the exegetical options in v. 15 in the "notes" part of his commentary, but stops at v. 14 in the "comment" part. See Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 202–203, 08.

ments, this trajectory of interpretation at times seem to insinuate that the targeted women dressed in a provocative manner, lectured their husbands in public and/or lent their ears to a dangerous heresy.[18]

Less apologetically minded scholars, including feminist interpreters, seem to accept the verse as a soteriological statement, saying that women should bear children in order to be saved.[19] Most of these scholars assume that a group of ascetic opponents preaching sexual renunciation were causing disruption in the Pastor's community. It is against this ascetic background that the statement in verse 15 has been interpreted. As Jouette Bassler has argued: "His objective in promoting childbearing is to provide an effective response to the ascetic demands of the opponents."[20]

The reconstruction of an immediate epistolary context has, then, been a common way to explain this puzzling and peculiar statement. On the one hand, a conservative trajectory seems to "blame" a certain group of women in the Pauline congregation of Ephesus for being out of bounds in terms of doctrine and behavior. On the other hand, feminist scholars reconstruct a group (more vaguely based geographically) of celibate women at the turn of the century who challenge the Pastoral theology. In the feminist interpretation, it is the Pastor's utmost concern to silence this group, which he does by means of household regulations, by restricting access to the widow's circle, and by his suggestion that women will be saved through childbearing.[21] As noted in Chapter One, there are serious theoretical challenges to such a historical reconstruction. From a poststructural point of view, it is not thought possible to get at "what really happened" on the basis of a text.

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[18] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 219–220; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 231–232; Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows. The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*, 121–122. Porter too, although he criticizes "ideological criticism," seems close to blaming the women when he argues that "the women were habitually spending time gossiping in each other's houses" and that they were "telling all sorts of silly myths." See Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1 Timothy 2.15)?," 101–102. For an assessment of different scholarly trajectories in Pastoral Epistles research, see Kartzow and Solevåg, "Who Loves The Pastorals and Why?". Published in Norwegian as Solevåg and Kartzow, "Hvem bryr seg om Pastoralbrevene? Nyere trender i Pastoralbrevsforskningen."

[19] See e.g. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 48–49; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 61; Krause, *1 Timothy*, 64. See also Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1 Timothy 2.15)?."

[20] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 61.

[21] See e.g. Jouette M. Bassler, "Adam, Eve and the Pastor. The Use of Genesis 2–3 in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis. Intrigue in the Garden*, ed. Gregory Allen Robbins (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1988); Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3–16."

The letters' descriptions of the opponents have often been used to reconstruct the social and theological make-up of the Pastorals' adversaries. But what is said about the opponents cannot be neatly added together to create a clear picture. It is claimed that they are law-teachers who do not understand the law (1 Tim 1:3–7); they are ascetics who prohibit marriage and certain types of food (4:3); they are word-wranglers who think godliness is a means of gain (6:3; Tit 1:11); they teach that the resurrection has already taken place (2 Tim 1:18); they sneak into homes and overpower silly women (3:6); their judgment is deficient and they are ensnared by the devil (2:26; 3:8); they are interested in myths and genealogies (1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4; Tit 3:9); they are circumcised and teach Jewish myths (Tit 1:10; 14); their minds and consciences are corrupted and they are unable to do good (1:15–16). These descriptions have led to different assessments of the opponents by scholars as Jewish,[22] Gnostics with ascetic tendencies,[23] or a hybrid group, such as "Judaizing Gnosticism."[24] Deborah Krause has criticized these attempts, arguing that it is problematic to lump all the characterizations together, since this creates a group of opponents so vague that it fits "any Christian expression opposed to the Pastorals' brand of 'orthodoxy.'"[25] Rather, these labels serve as invective, in order to categorize the opponent as "other," as outside orthodoxy. As Jay Twomey has argued, the descriptions of opponents are generalized polemical attacks and seem to be driven by the author's pseudepigraphical impulse.[26] The description of the opponents is not meant to say anything accurate about "them," but rather to describe the boundaries of the in-group. Lone Fatum has compared the Pastoral tactic to former US president George W. Bush's rhetoric of the "axis of evil:" "the best way to subjugate and control your own is by launching a war, qualifying the Other as common enemy in the process."[27] In my opinion, it is better to assume that little can be gleaned about the specific nature of the opponents from these letters.

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[22] Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, 14–15.

[23] Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. A Commentary*, 116; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 27–28.

[24] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 17.

[25] Krause, *1 Timothy*, 36.

[26] Twomey, *The Pastoral Epistles Through the Centuries*, 19. See also Krause, *1 Timothy*, 35–38; Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 89–99.

[27] Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy," 185–186.

The feminist research that has been done on early Christianity has been highly valuable in this respect. This research has brought new insights about the diversity of early Christianity by giving attention to previously neglected texts, trends and social groups, and locating Christian phenomena within a wider context of women's participation in religious communities in the Greco-Roman world.[28] Not surprisingly, in the case of the Pastoral Epistles, much of the interest has been on the women opponents, and their (perhaps) ascetic stance.[29] Notwithstanding my methodological critique of such a reconstruction, these works offer valuable insights, as we have seen in Chapter One. Recent feminist works on the Pastorals approach the texts more broadly and try to locate them within wider Greco-Roman discourses concerning asceticism, masculinity, gossip, etc.[30] In the same vein, I propose to dig deeper into the Pastorals' construction of gender and its implications for soteriology.[31] Rather than reconstructing a specific background for 1Tim 2:15, can we place it within a wider discursive environment about concern for women's childbearing role? First, however, we need to find out what else the Pastoral Epistles have to say about salvation.

Salvation in the Pastoral Epistles

As a preliminary exercise, before interfacing the Pastoral soteriology with childbearing discourse, I will map some of the ideas about salvation to be

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[28] See e.g. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*; Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*; MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. The Power of the Hysterical Woman*; Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*.

[29] See e.g. Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1Tim 5:3–16."; MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, 180–183.

[30] See e.g. Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*; Glancy, "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles."; Mary Rose D'Angelo, "'Knowing How to Preside over His Own Household': Imperial Masculinity and Christian Asceticism in the Pastorals, Hermas and Luke-Acts," in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy."; Gail Corrington Streete, "Askesis and Resistance in the Pastoral Letters," *Asceticism and the New Testament* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[31] See also Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Salvation, Gender and the Figure of Eve in The Pastoral Epistles," *Lectio Difficilior*, no. 2 (2012).

found in these letters. Is salvation a central concern? What does it mean? How is it gained?

The Centrality of Salvation

Salvation is an important concept in the Pastorals. God is called σωτήρ (1 Tim 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), as is Christ (2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6). This designation is not used anywhere in the authentic Pauline corpus about either God or Jesus,[32] and is thus one of the linguistic and theological features which distinguish the Pastoral Epistles from the other Pauline letters.[33] Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann have pointed out that such usage is similar to the way Hellenistic rulers were called "savior." This discourse became especially forceful in the early Empire, when Augustus finally brought peace and prosperity after years of disorder.[34] As savior of humanity, God is the ultimate king and ruler in the Pastorals (τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, 1 Tim 1:17; βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων καὶ κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων, 6:17).[35] Salvation is God's wish for humanity (1 Tim 2:4) and the reason why Jesus came into the world: "to save sinners" (ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι, 1 Tim 1:15). To be saved is the overarching, ultimate goal for the believer, and involves access to the heavenly kingdom of God (2 Tim 4:18), in other words, eternal life after death (ζωῆς αἰωνίου, Tit 3:7). Christ has abolished death and "brought life and immortality to light" (φωτίσαντος δὲ ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν, 2 Tim 1:10). Although, as noted above, it is disputed what the verb σῴζω means in 1 Tim 2:15 (*saved* or *rescued* through childbearing?), it is generally agreed that all other occurrences of the verb refer to eschatological salvation in the meaning of eternal life.[36] Frances Young has suggested that the so-called "faithful sayings" (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος), recurring throughout the letters, are connected to statements about salvation.[37] Interestingly, a "faithful saying" immediately follows the statement that women will be saved

[32] With the possible exception of Phil 3:20: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ [σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν]." In the NT, apart from the occurrences in the Pastorals, σωτήρ is used to designate either God or Jesus about a dozen times (in Luke, John, Ephesians, 2 Peter, 1 John, Jude). According to Fiore, all appearances are in late works associated with Asia Minor, Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, 32.

[33] Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 42; Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 50–51.

[34] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 102–103.

[35] Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 41–42.

[36] Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1 Timothy 2.15)?," 94.

[37] Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 56–57.

through childbearing (1 Tim 3:1). Nevertheless, few interpreters include 1 Tim 2:15 in their treatments of the letters' teaching about salvation. The place of childbearing in the Pastorals' soteriology is therefore fairly uncharted terrain.

Salvation in the Pastorals' terms is a promise not yet fully realized. Accordingly, the idea that "the resurrection has already taken place [ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι]" (2 Tim 2:18) is deemed heretical. There is, however, a stronger emphasis on the present experience of salvation than there is in the genuine Paulines. According to Davies, "the Pastorals regard 'salvation' as already inaugurated by Jesus' past appearing (2 Tim 3:15) but awaiting a final consummation in eternal glory at the eschaton (2 Tim 2:10–11)."[38] Thus, Jesus' saving work can be referred to in the past tense (ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς, Tit 3:5; τοῦ σώσαντος ἡμᾶς, 2 Tim 1:9). As Dibelius and Conzelmann also have noted, in Paul "good citizenship" is eschatologically conditioned, whereas in the Pastorals "there is a constant emphasis on the meaning of salvation for the present."[39]

The ritual alluded to as "the water of rebirth [λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας] and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Tit 3:5), is taken as a sign of the future possibility of eternal life. If this is a reference to baptism, as is commonly assumed,[40] it is an example of the early Christian notion of baptism as a second birth, reminiscent of John 3:3–8.[41] Joseph Ysebaert connects the Christian use of the term παλιγγενεσία to its Stoic usage, in which it was understood as a cosmic regeneration, and thus it means "renewal" or "new beginning" rather than "rebirth."[42] The idea of cosmic regeneration is clearly intended in the other NT passage where παλιγγενεσία is used, in Matt 19:28. Tit 3:3–7, however, is different, as it describes the individual transition that all believers go through. Thus I would argue that παλιγγενεσία here refers to a personal rebirth by the individual believer at the moment of baptism, not to a cosmic transformation or the initiation of a new world order. Interestingly, this transition is also conceptualized as becoming part of a new family. Before, the author explains, they were slaves under sin (δουλεύοντες ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ

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[38] Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 43.

[39] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 8–9.

[40] Tor Vegge, "Baptismal Phrases in the Deuteropauline Epistles," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism*, ed. David Hellholm, et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 553–557; Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, 219–220; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 148–150.

[41] Vegge, "Baptismal Phrases in the Deuteropauline Epistles," 556.

[42] Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology. Its origins and Early Development*, 134.

ἡδοναῖς, v. 3) but by the washing of rebirth they have now become heirs with hope of eternal life (κληρονόμοι γενηθῶμεν κατ' ἐλπίδα ζωῆς αἰωνίου, v. 7). Thus, this baptismal imagery connects concepts of family, slavery and birth. In order to understand the soteriology of the Pastorals it may be useful to explore the meanings of these social concepts, as I will do later in this chapter.

Salvation, Sound Teaching and Good Deeds

How is a believer's faith in future salvation expressed in the here and now? Tit 2:11–14 may serve as an example of the interconnections among past, future and present aspects of salvation:

> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation [χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ σωτήριος] to all, training us [παιδεύουσα] to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly [σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς], while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds [ζηλωτὴν καλῶν ἔργων]. (Tit 2:11–14)

According to this passage, God's grace trains or educates the believer. Faith in the savior God is expressed in the present, through upright conduct and good deeds. But a sincere faith (πίστις ἀνυπόκριτος, 1 Tim 1:5) is also expressed in a believer's compliance with the teachings of Paul: "Hold to the standard of sound teaching [Ὑποτύπωσιν ἔχε ὑγιαινόντων λόγων] that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 1:13). These concepts of sound teaching (ἡ ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία or ὑγιαίνων λόγος) and good deeds (ἔργα ἀγαθά or ἔργα καλά) are often invoked in connection with salvation. The doctrines of faith, which lead to salvation, are called "sound teaching" (ὑγιαίνων λόγος, 2 Tim 1:13; 1 Tim 6:3, ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία, 1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). As Paul instructs Timothy: "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching [ἔπεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ]; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save [σώσεις] both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim 4:16). Good deeds (ἔργα ἀγαθά, 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 1:16; 3:1, ἔργα καλά, 1 Tim 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Tit 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14) are also somehow profitable for one's salvation. Following a passage on salvation (Tit 3:4–7), the writer concludes: "The saying is sure [Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος]. I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable [καλὰ καὶ ὠφέλιμα] to everyone" (Tit 3:8).

There is not only a positive connection between good deeds, sound doctrine and salvation, but also a negative connection between immorality, false doctrine and eternal destruction:[43]

> Whoever teaches otherwise [ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖ] and does not agree with the sound words [ὑγιαίνουσιν λόγοις] of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness [τῇ κατ' εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλίᾳ], is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words [νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεις καὶ λογομαχίας]. (1 Tim 6:3–4)

> After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions [αἱρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον], since you know that such a person is perverted [ἐξέστραπται] and sinful [ἁμαρτάνει], being self-condemned [αὐτοκατάκριτος]. (Tit 3:10–11)

The sound teachings of the Pastoral community clearly include written sources. The Hebrew Scriptures are part of the writings considered sacred (ἱερὰ γράμματα, 2 Tim 3:15) and inspired (γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, 3:16),[44] and particular biblical stories and sayings are referred to (1 Tim 2:13–14; 5:18; 2 Tim 3:8–9), and it is asserted that the law (presumably the Torah) is good, although wrangling over it is discouraged (1 Tim 1:8–10). As will be further discussed below, there is a strong emphasis on Paul, Timothy and Titus as teachers. The right doctrine is "a deposit" (παραθήκη, 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12; 1:14) handed over along an authoritative line from Paul to Timothy to other capable teachers: "and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well" (2 Tim 2:2). The realm of salvation seems to be restricted to this authoritative line, as for example in the "pep-talk" directed to Timothy in 1 Tim 4:16 quoted above. Salvation, then, is embedded in the teachings, which seemingly only authorized leaders can pass on. Can women be part of this trajectory as teachers or only as receivers of teaching? What about male and female slaves? The performance of good deeds (ἔργα ἀγαθά), likewise, is central to salvation, but what are these deeds? They are sometimes linked especially to women (1 Tim 2:10; 5:10), while other passages seem to speak of a virtue for everyone in the *ekklesia* (2 Tim 2:21; 3;17; Tit 3:1). Are the deeds the same for women as well as men?

In this survey of the soteriological ideas in the Pastorals, Greco-Roman ideas of the kyriarchically stratified household have surfaced from time to

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[43] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 41–42.

[44] It has been noted that this is the only NT instance where the inspired usefulness of Hebrew Scriptures is formally stated. Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 16.

time. How is the household envisaged in the Pastorals? What is its relation to salvation? These questions will be scrutinized in the following section.

Constructions of Gender and Class

The Pastorals presuppose a kyriarchically stratified society. Within the state, subjects should be respectful and offer prayers for rulers and those in power (1 Tim 2:2: Tit 3:2). Within the household, there is a distinction between the householder, designated by the term δεσπότης (1 Tim 6:1–2; 2 Tim 2:21; Tit 2:9), and his subordinates. Following a Pauline pattern, the term κύριος is used only for the Lord Jesus (e.g. 1 Tim 1:2; 12; 6:3; 2 Tim 2:7; 4:22). God is also described with kyriarchal language, as the ultimate ruler and king, with a household plan of salvation for his people (λαός, Tit 2:14) and his heirs (κληρονόμοι, Tit 3:7), and an assembly (ἐκκλησία) organized as a household (οἶκος, 1 Tim 3:15). In this section I will map more closely how such an *oikos* ideology distributes different rules for teaching and behavior in relation to class and gender.

The Kyriarchal Structure of the Household of God

The household and its organisation is an important topic in the Pastorals. All believers must live according to their place in the household (Titus 2:1–10). Men are instructed to lead decent family lives and are expected to have subordinate family members under control (1 Tim 3:4; 12; Tit 1:6). Women, children and slaves are urged to be obedient and submissive (1 Tim 3:4; 3:12; 5:1–6:2; Titus 2:2–10). We recognize the kyriarchal structure of Greco-Roman family life, where the householder dominates over wife, children and slaves. But the *oikos* also becomes a model for the community, the *ekklesia*:

> Ταῦτά σοι γράφω ἐλπίζων ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σὲ ἐν τάχει· ἐὰν δὲ βραδύνω, ἵνα εἰδῇς πῶς δεῖ ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ ἀναστρέφεσθαι, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος, στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας.
>
> I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. (1 Tim 3:14–15)

The community of believers is envisaged, in the Pastorals, as a household—the household of God (οἶκος θεοῦ). The overseer (ἐπίσκοπος) is called God's steward or household manager (θεοῦ οἰκονόμον, Tit 1:7) and the gospel is

called οἰκονομία θεοῦ (1Tim 1:4), God's household plan.[45] The individual households of believing families are the key building blocks of the "household of God"-structure. Each believer has a place and a responsibility as a member of his or her household, and that place in turn requires a particular kind of behavior or certain duties in the *ekklesia*. As David Verner has argued: "The author of the Pastorals sets forth in his composition a coherent concept of the church as the household of God. This concept is two-pronged, informing the author's understanding both of the household as the basic social unit in the church and of the church as a social structure modeled on the household."[46] In other words, the household model of the Pastorals is two-tiered, and both levels must work together.[47] Only if proper household conduct can be demonstrated can a person be entrusted with a leadership position in the *ekklesia*: "for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church [ἐκκλησίας θεοῦ]?" (1Tim 3:5). In the believing community, older men must be treated as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and so on (1Tim 5:1–2). In accord with this family focus in community organization, doctrinal deviation is connected with a disdain for family life and proper household conduct: heretics forbid people to marry (1Tim 4:3); young widows leave their houses in search of gossip and heretical teachings (1Tim 5:13–15); false teachers seek out silly women who let them into their homes (2Tim 3:6); and false teaching causes the ruin of whole families (Tit 1:11).

The ideal of having been married only once seems to be applied to those who seek the leadership positions of overseer (ἐπίσκοπος), server (διάκονος), elder (πρεσβύτερος) and widow (χήρα). The men should be μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνήρ (1Tim 3:2; 12; Tit 1:6) and the women ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή (1Tim 5:9). As noted in Chapter Two, the *univira* was an idealization of the Roman woman who had had only one man and never remarried upon widowhood.[48] Despite this ideal, the realities of life often brought widowhood on men as well as women at a young age. Women were generally much younger than their husbands and could thus be widowed while still in their childbearing years,

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[45] For a discussion of the term οἰκονομία θεοῦ, see Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 54–55.

[46] Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, 1.

[47] This is different from other early Christian usage of family and kinship language, where a metaphorical level is appropriated at the same time as biological kinship ties are critiqued or abandoned. Cf. for example Jesus' words in Matt 12:46–47 and parallels. For a thorough discussion of family language in early Christianity see Halvor Moxnes, ed. *Constructing Early Christian Families. Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[48] Fantham, *Women in the Classical World. Image and Text*, 232.

and husbands could lose their wives in childbirth. Remarriage was common, not only after the death of a spouse, but also following divorce.[49] In the Pastorals the *univira* ideal is extended to include men as well as women who seek a leadership position within the believing community.

The household model is different from the model of community that is most prevalent in the Pauline letters—the metaphor of the *body*. Especially in Romans and 1 Corinthians, there is a concept of the community of believers as the body of Christ (e.g. Rom 12; 1 Cor 10:16–18; 12:12–27).[50] Many scholars have noted this shift from body metaphor to household metaphor in deutero-Pauline Christianity.[51] This shift has often been linked to the use of "household codes" in the later epistolary writings of the New Testament and in the Apostolic Fathers.[52] Such a *Haustafel*, in its ideal form, "addresses three key pairs in the household—master and slave, husband and wife, father and children—and describes how the relationships properly function."[53] Although the form is fragmentary in the Pastorals, most scholars recognize the influence from "rules for the household" in 1 Tim 2:8–15; 6:1–2; Tit 2:1–10.[54] The Christian household codes are closely linked to Greco-Roman ideals of household management discussed in Chapter Two, and may also be connected to imperial ideology. In a resent survey of research on the Christian household codes, MacDonald argues that the political and ideological implications of the codes still need to be explored.[55] This is exactly what I attempt to do here. What I call an *oikos* ideology saturates the Pastoral Epistles, and is the overarching principle that organizes ideas about

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[49] D'Ambra, *Roman Women*, 46.

[50] See Martin's discussion of the "society-as-body topos" in Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 92–103.

[51] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 73; Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy," 187; Margaret Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles. I and II Timothy and Titus*, ed. Ivor H. Jones, Epworth Commentaries (London: Epworth, 1996b), 114.

[52] See e.g. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*; Turid Karlsen Seim, "Hustavlen i 1 Pet 3.1–7 og dens tradisjonshistoriske sammenheng," *Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 91, no. 2 (1990); Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive. The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*; Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*.

[53] James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament. A Handbook* (London: SPCK, 1992), 68.

[54] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 44, 82, 139; Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, 91–92.

[55] Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Beyond Identification of the Topos of Household Management: Reading the Household Codes in Light of Recent Methodologies and Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 57, no. 1 (2009): 84–90.

gender as well as class and age differentiation, as I shall discuss below. References to households and use of household language are not restricted to the recognizable *Haustafel*-passages but seem to inform most aspects of the Pastor's theology. As Fatum puts it, the author builds the whole church "on the unabridged model of the *paterfamilias*-institution."[56]

One consequence of the use of the *oikos* model as a structuring concept is that it blurs the boundaries between family and community.[57] The two entities of *oikos* and *ekklesia* are so similar in these letters, and so interdependent, that it becomes difficult to distinguish them. For example, it has been discussed whether 1Tim 2:9–15 and 3:11 are concerned with the relationship between a husband and his wife, or with the relationship between men and women in the community.[58] In these passages the term for a married woman, γυνή, is used and they are explicitly compared to men (ἀνήρ, 1Tim 2:8; 3:12). However, the *oikos* ideology's two-tiered notion of household blurs the distinctions between community and family, and makes it impossible to decide which setting is intended. Similarly, it may be asked whether the term "widow," χήρα, refers to household members or to a particular church office? The passage concerning widows (1Tim 5:2–16) is also shaped by the double household model. If a woman's husband cannot take care of her because he is dead, her (male) children or grandchildren should. If she has no household members (οἰκεῖος, 1Tim 5:8) to care for her, the Household of God should take on this kyriarchal responsibility (5:3–5). Kyriarchal structures govern in both spheres, and the ideal woman—the wife (or widow) with children—is subordinated to men in both spheres. At the time these letters were written and first circulated, Christian communities still gathered in private homes, hence there is also a spatial overlap of the two tiers of the Household of God.[59] Thus, these passages should not be read as only referring to a wife's relation to her husband, but as simultaneously working on two levels.

The purpose of introducing the household model, is, as Fatum has argued, a political strategy. The primary concerns in the Pastorals are "church order

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[56] Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy," 179.

[57] Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, 91–92.

[58] Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 221, 85–86; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 59–60, 70.

[59] Turid Karlsen Seim, "Interfacing House and Church: Converting Household Codes to Church Order," in *Text, Image, and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World. A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 64.

and internal consolidation."[60] Does this political strategy have soteriological implications? I have already argued that salvation is a central theological issue in the Pastorals. God is the ultimate householder in these letters and he has a household management plan (οἰκονομία θεοῦ, 1Tim 1:4). This plan is concerned with salvation, and "the ordering of God's household is clearly part of the outworking of that plan."[61] May this household management plan, which is concerned with childbearing? As I noted in Chapter Two, the household was considered a reproductive unit in the Greco-Roman world. According to Aristotle, the household served two primary functions:

> The union of female and male *for the continuance of the species* [οἷον θῆλυ μὲν καὶ ἄρρεν τῆς γεννήσεως ἕνεκεν] …; and the union of natural ruler and natural subject *for the sake of security* [ἄρχον δὲ φύσει καὶ ἀρχόμενον διὰ τὴν σωτηρίαν]. (*Pol.* 1252a [Rackham, LCL], emphases added)

Considering the Pastoral creation of the *oikos* ideology, one could ask what the procreative function of the household means for the believing community? Does procreation have a soteriological aspect, and if so, how? These are questions I will come back to in the conclusion to this chapter. First, I will look at how the *oikos* ideology of the Pastorals tries to regulate the behavior of free women and men, as well as the behavior of slaves.

Female Virtue and Vice

Women's lives and their virtue as believers are repeatedly formulated in the language of domesticity and subordination. There are four passages that deal with prescriptive behavior for women:

1. 1Tim 2:9–15 covers a combination of themes: Women should avoid expensive clothing, and rather put on "good deeds" (ἔργα ἀγαθά); they should be silent and subordinated to men; their salvation is conditioned by childbearing and the deeds of faith, love, holiness and modesty.
2. 1Tim 3:11 speaks about women in a passage dealing with the community position of servers (διάκονοι): "Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things." There is a discussion within scholarship whether these women are the wives of the

[60] Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy," 175.
[61] Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 54–55.

(male) servers mentioned before and after (vv. 8–13), or belong to a separate, female office.[62]

3. 1 Tim 5:1–15 starts with the command to relate to fellow believers on the model of the household: older members should be treated as parents, younger members as siblings, and so forth. From v. 3 the attention shifts to widows (χῆραι) with a long set of rules and regulations. Older widows can only be enrolled (καταλέγω) if they are over sixty. If not, they should marry and bear children.
4. Titus 2:3–5 likewise differentiates between two age groups of women. The older are instructed to teach the younger to love husband and children, manage their households and submit to their husbands.

The extent to which the (good or bad) behavior of the women in these passages is connected to their household roles is striking. The instruction to young widows in 1 Tim 5:14 serves almost as a slogan for the life the ideal woman should lead: "to marry, to bear children and to manage the household" (γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν). This command complements the description of the older widow, worthy of entering "the widow's circle": "Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once; she must be well attested for her good works [ἔργοις καλοῖς], as one who has brought up children [ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν], shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way [παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ]" (1 Tim 5:9–10). Good deeds, then, seem to be closely linked to a woman's place in the household. In Tit 2:3–5 as well, women are instructed to care for husband, children and house:

> Likewise, tell the older women [πρεσβύτιδας] to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good [καλοδιδασκάλους], so that they may encourage the young women [τὰς νέας] to love their husbands [φιλάνδρους], to love their children [φιλοτέκνους] to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household [οἰκουργοὺς], kind, being submissive to their husbands [ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν] so that the word of God may not be discredited. (Tit 2:3–5)

Women's submission under their respective husbands is central here as well as in 1 Tim 2:11–14, where a reference to Adam and Eve gives scriptural support for the instruction. Yet these women have their own realm of authority, since they are instructed to rule in their households (οἰκοδεσποτέω, 1 Tim

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[62] See Jennifer H. Stiefel, "Women Deacons in 1 Timothy: A Linguistic and Literary Look at 'Women Likewise …'," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995); Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 70.

5:14) and care for household duties (οἰκουργός, Tit 2:5).[63] The women targeted in these passages appear to be envisaged as the wives of householders (δεσπότης). Only the passage about women (married to?) servers does not explicitly connect women to their position in the household,[64] but puts limitations on their speech by instructing them not to be slanderous (μὴ διαβόλους, 1 Tim 3:11). Note however that the following verse instructs male servers to be "married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well" (3:12).

The primary role of the married woman was to produce legitimate heirs for the couple. A concern for women's procreative role comes to the surface in many instances in the Pastorals. The drive to bear children is clear in the reference to τεκνογονία in 1 Tim 2:15 and the related verb τεκνογονέω in 1 Tim 5:14. As I noted in Chapter Two, these terms can be found in both household management literature and medical literature concerned with women's childbearing. Some of the odd regulations about widows may be understood from a procreative perspective. The Pastoral command to young widows is explicitly procreative: they should bear children. The limitation of the widow's circle to women past sixty has been understood as a means to reduce the group's power by decreasing their number.[65] However, that the age limit is set this high may not be only to reduce numbers, but to make sure that no women with childbearing potential entered the group. Sixty years was considered the upper limit for the onset of menopause. According to Soranus, women could menstruate until the age of sixty, although fifty was considered a more normal time to enter menopause (*Gyn*. 1.20). Augustan marriage legislation required women up to the age of fifty to remarry within a period of two years.[66] The demand in 5:9 that widows who enter the group be "married only once," excludes the younger widows commanded to marry in 5:14 from any future possibility of entering the group. Although the *univira* is held up as an ideal, young women are actually advised against adhering to that ideal. As was the case with the Augustan marriage laws, the Pastorals, too, defy their reverence of the *univira* by their regulations. Perhaps this is also for the same reason as the Augustan legislation: out of a procreative concern. In the final analysis,

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[63] Οἰκοδεσποτέω: "to be master of a house or head of a family," LSJ. Οἰκουργός: "working at home," LSJ; "carrying out household responsibilities," BDAG.

[64] As Kartzow too has observed. Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, 134.

[65] Bassler, "The Widows' Tale: a Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3–16," 34.

[66] Rawson, "The Roman Family," 31.

the value of generating citizen children by means of a second marriage counted more for the emperors than the idealized image of the "once married." The *univira* could still be praised on tombstones and in epideictic speeches.[67] In the Pastorals, it is only in relation to younger widows that this principle is overruled. For male offices in the *ekklesia*, the expectation is that all should be married only once (1 Tim 3:2; 12; Tit 1:6). Nowhere is it stated that young men should rather remarry than take on such a duty. Thus, the procreative role seems to be more important for women than for men.

In 1 Tim 2:11–14 women are forbidden to teach and assume authority over men, with reference to what happened in the Garden of Eden: Eve was deceived, but Adam was not (v. 14). Perhaps surprisingly, then, Tit 2:3 urges older women to "teach what is good [καλοδιδασκάλους]" to younger women. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has argued that these instructions do not contradict each other, but "present two sides of the same patriarchal coin."[68] The point in both passages is that women can only teach other women. The end result of these women's teaching should be that younger women love their children and husbands. Thus, even the older women—past childbearing age—have a procreative role to play in teaching the younger about their childbearing duties. The idea seems to be that younger women should focus on their responsibilities in their own households, serving husbands and raising children, whereas older women/widows can take on a "mothering" role in the household of God, the *ekklesia*, by training younger women in their household duties and serving as widows. The term used (καλοδιδάσκαλος), "teacher of virtue"[69] or "teaching what is good"[70] is a hapax legomenon. Thus it may have been coined by the author.[71] By using this adjective, the highly charged verbs and nouns connected with male teaching (διδάσκω, διδάσκαλος, διδασκαλία, etc.) are avoided. Interestingly, καλοδιδάσκαλος combines elements from sound teaching (ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία) and good deeds (καλὰ ἔργα) in one and the same term. It does not necessarily mean only teaching *about* good deeds, as some interpreters argue.[72] As I argued above, sound teaching and good deeds are interconnected in the Pastorals. Thus,

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[67] Rawson, "The Roman Family," 32.

[68] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 290.

[69] LSJ.

[70] BDAG.

[71] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 194.

[72] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 194.

this term may also play on that connection and remind older women of their responsibility to instruct the younger women in sound doctrine so that this may result in good deeds.[73] I will return to the question of women's teaching in my exegesis of 1 Tim 2:11–12 below.

Perhaps younger women can take part in this transmission of teaching, too, by giving birth to and raising children of faith, who in turn become leaders, as Timothy's mother and grandmother have done (2 Tim 1:5). Eunice and Lois are posited as exemplary believers (2 Tim 1:5); the same sincere faith (ἀνυπόκριτος πίστις) that dwelt in them now lives in Timothy. Timothy's position as leader is dependent on Paul's instruction and authorization by male leaders' laying on of hands *as well as* by his female ancestors' transmission to him of "sincere faith". Later in the letter "Paul" asserts: "from childhood [ἀπὸ βρέφους] you have known the sacred writings [ἱερὰ γράμματα] that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:15). What NRSV has translated as "childhood," is in fact the Greek term for fetus or new-born baby, βρέφος.[74] Timothy has, so to speak, been imbued physically with the faith through his mother's nurture in the womb and at the breast.[75] A Christian mother's duties seem, then, to include instructions in the faith.[76] These ideal mothers are thus presented as teachers of their own children. This may be another exception to the prohibition to teach: women, it appears, may teach children, as well as other women.

In the Pastorals named women occur only in 2 Timothy. In addition to Eunice and Lois, two women are mentioned in the farewell greetings: Prisca and Claudia (2 Tim 4:19; 21). These fictitious greetings probably draw on information about persons from Acts, Colossians and Philemon in order to sustain the letters' claim to Pauline authorship.[77] The greeting to "Prisca

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[73] As Kartzow and I also have argued in Kartzow and Solevåg, "Who Loves The Pastorals and Why?".

[74] "Babe in the womb, foetus"; "new-born babe," LSJ.

[75] In Norwegian, the expression "it came with my mother's milk" is quite common ("å få noe inn med morsmelken"). Andrew Thomas has made me aware that Augustine uses the same image in *Confessions* 3.4.8: "For this name, according to Your mercy, O Lord, this name of my Saviour Your Son, had my tender heart piously drunk in, deeply treasured even with my mother's milk."

[76] Some scholars argue that 2 Tim 2:15b also hints at a mother's responsibility for bringing her children up in the faith. The conditional clause ("provided *they* continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty") may be interpreted as referring to the woman's children. See e.g. Horn and Martens, *"Let the little children come to me". Childhood and Children in Early Christianity*, 139–140. This passage will be further discussed below.

[77] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 128.

and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus" underscores the household structure by referring to a married couple and a household. The tradition of Prisca as a teacher of Christian doctrine (cf. Acts 18:26) is not mentioned.[78] This should not be surprising, given the Pastor's attempts to restrict women's access to teaching roles.

Bad behavior is harshly warned against. In 2 Tim 3:6–7 the author speaks in vituperative terms about women who listen to heretical teachers: "For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women [γυναικάρια],[79] overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires [ἐπιθυμίαις], who are always being instructed [μανθάνοντα] and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth." Such women are ruled by desires and sins and eager to learn the opponents' deceptive teachings. One of the things they teach, according to the Pastor, is rejection of marriage (1 Tim 4:3; 5:14). Another attack on negative female behavior is the reference in 1 Tim 4:7 to "old wives' tales" (γραώδεις μύθους) and several exhortations not to be slanderous (διάβολος, 1 Tim 3:11; Tit 3:2; φλύαρος, 1 Tim 5:13). The references to gossipy speech and slander in connection with women draw on an ancient stereotype that women are gossipers, as Kartzow has shown. She argues that in the Pastorals, "gossip is constructed as 'women's talk' and a gossiper is 'mostly a woman.'"[80] It should be noted that in the Pastorals the devil is also called "the slanderer" (ὁ διάβολος, 1 Tim 3:6; 7; 2 Tim 2:26). Although this is a common designation for Satan in the Septuagint as well as the New Testament, only here does the personified noun occur in proximity with the adjective. Deceptive speech, then, seems to be something women and the devil have in common. 1 Tim 5:11–13 reveals a fear for young widows' sensual desires (καταστρηνιάω, v. 11), and worry about what they might learn if they move outside the house. Such statements should not be taken at face value as referring to a specific group of women, but should rather be understood as the Pastorals' idea of deviant behavior. It seems that the deviation evolves around two major areas: sexuality and speech. The solution to the problems of deviating sexuality and speech is to confine women to the "safe space" of the household. Marriage, unadorned dress and a restricted social life will keep women away from sensual temptations and

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[78] This tradition may be unknown to the letter writer, but it is interesting that the tradition of listing Prisca before her husband Aquila (Acts 18:18; 26; Rom 16:3) is followed. Aquila is mentioned first, however, in Acts 18:2 and 1 Cor 16:19.

[79] Γυναικάριον is the diminutive of γυνή and carries derogatory connotations. See γυναικάριον, BDAG.

[80] Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, 155.

from heretical teachings. Within the *oikos* ideology, then, the duties of a mother and wife are closely related to, or indeed identical with, the duties of the godly woman.

Protocols of Masculinity

The dual concerns for dominance and self-restraint are often singled out as the two overarching aspects of the protocols of masculinity. These concerns are also evident in the Pastorals.[81] Glancy has noted that in the Pastoral Epistles, the "cultivation of a self-controlled masculine self is coupled with the cultivation of a harmonious household."[82]

The concern for *dominance* is first of all expressed through the urgent message about keeping control within the household. Dominance by the male head of the household, the κύριος, over all other groups, was the ruling principle of the Greek concept of household as well as of the Roman concept of the *paterfamilias*. The ideal man in the Pastorals, and thus also the ideal community leader, is a householder, who has authority over his wife (1Tim 2:11–12), control over his children (1Tim 3:4, Tit 1:6) and slaves that are submissive and respectful (1Tim 6:1; Tit 2:9).[83] Being a father is part of the role of the head of the household and thus an important masculine role in the Pastorals. Fatherhood is used symbolically to express leadership and superiority. In the opening passages of all three epistles, the Pastoral "Paul" calls Timothy and Titus his children (1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2; 2:1; Tit 1:4) and is thus presented as the father of the community. By comparison, the authentic Paul uses the term brother (ἀδελφός) to designate the relationship between himself and other members of the believing community, and frequently entreats the letter recipients as brothers (and sisters).[84] The fatherhood language in the Pastorals becomes especially forceful because it imitates the relationship between God and humans/Christ. God is called father (1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4). Within the kyriarchal framework of the Pastorals, the position as son is a subordinate one, thereby giving authority

[81] For specific treatments of constructions of masculinity in the Pastorals, see D'Angelo, "'Knowing How to Preside over His Own Household': Imperial Masculinity and Christian Asceticism in the Pastorals, Hermas and Luke-Acts."; Glancy, "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles."

[82] Glancy, "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles," 236.

[83] Fatum, "Christ Domesticated: The Household Theology of the Pastorals as Political Strategy," 179.

[84] Reidar Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!". Christian Siblingship in Paul*, JSNTSup (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 268.

to the figure of Paul, and thus to the teachings of the letters. Interestingly, the letters never allude to Paul, Timothy or Titus' own families, although the householders' ability to govern his family is a topic in reference to community leadership positions such as elder and overseer. We do not know whether the historical Paul, Timothy or Titus were married and/or had children. Perhaps the silence in the Pastorals is an attempt to circumvent the traditionthat these men were single and childless?

The protocol of dominance is expressed not only through kyriarchal language. The teacher is another male ideal in the Pastorals. Almost as prevalent as the *oikos* language are words connected to teaching and training (e.g. διδάσκω, παιδεύω).[85] As I noted above, adherence to the "sound doctrine" is foundational for salvation (1 Tim 4:16; Tit 2:11–12). Accordingly, the role of the teacher is of crucial importance. As with the fatherhood image, the relationship between Paul and Timothy/Titus serves as a model. Paul is the teacher (διδάσκαλος) of the Gentiles, appointed by God (1 Tim 2:7), while Timothy and Titus are under his instruction (παραγγελία, 1 Tim 1:18). Paul is placed in a position parallel to God's, as both God and Paul have the power and authority to train (παιδεύω, 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:25; Tit: 2:12). The male recipients of the letters are instructed to teach (1 Tim 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 2:15). In turn, so may the designated leaders (1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:9). Training in oratory was a part of the self-cultivation in which elite males fashioned themselves into men.[86] The language used in the Pastorals draws on the discourse of education and training in rhetoric and philosophy. According to Mary R. D'Angelo, the construction of a fictive sender and recipients presents the letters as "man-to-man talks," wherein male leaders and members of the congregation can identify with the "chain of command," while women, children and slaves are "not so much hearers as overhearers of this instruction."[87] It has been noted that the authoritative line of teaching is connected to male, written teaching, which seems to be valued over female, illegitimate speech.[88] Gail Streete similarly finds that the written word is evaluated

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[85] Some of the words connected to this semantic field are διδασκαλία (15 occurences): "teaching, instruction," LSJ; διδάσκαλος (three occurrences): "teacher, master", LSJ; διδάσκω (five occurrences): "instruct, teach," LSJ; διδαχή (2 Tim 4:2): "teaching; military regulation or discipline," LSJ; παιδεία (2 Tim 3:16): "rearing of a child; training and teaching, education," LSJ; παιδεύω (20 occurences): "train and teach, educate," LSJ.

[86] Glancy, "Protocols of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles," 258–259.

[87] D'Angelo, "'Knowing How to Preside over His Own Household': Imperial Masculinity and Christian Asceticism in the Pastorals, Hermas and Luke-Acts," 271–272.

[88] See Dewey, "1 Timothy," 359.

over speech: "Where speech is allowed in the Pastoral Epistles, it is regulated and disciplined, proceeding from a single source; it is institutionalized, not charismatic."[89]

There is a connection between the two masculine ideals of father and teacher, since it was a father's responsibility to secure his sons' education. The role of the father was not only generative; education (*paideia*) was the means by which he raised his son to become a mature adult.[90] According to Streete, the Paul constructed in the Pastorals "provides a model for the spiritual parent who, through instruction, creates a "true child," one in his own supposed image."[91]

The ideal man in the Pastorals must also show self-restraint, the second protocol of Greco-Roman masculinity. From the expectations towards men in leadership positions we can glean that the ideal man is not supposed to be "arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain" (Tit 1:7; see also 1 Tim 3:3). Rather, he should be "temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable," (1 Tim 3:2) "without anger or argument" (χωρὶς ὀργῆς καὶ διαλογισμοῦ, 1 Tim 2:8), and "self-controlled" (σώφρων, Tit 1:8). Moderation in drink seems important, but there is also a concern for sexual restraint. As already noted, men who remarry are not eligible for the offices of the *ekklesia* (μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνήρ, 1 Tim 3:2; 12; Tit 1:6), and younger men must behave with "absolute purity" towards younger women (νεωτέρας ὡς ἀδελφὰς ἐν πάσῃ ἁγνείᾳ, 1 Tim 5:2). Finally, the man in control of himself is characterized by his speech. Ideal men are teachers and speakers of the truth (e.g. 1 Tim 2:7: Tit 1:9), while deviating men are quarrelsome liars and empty talkers (e.g. 1 Tim 6:3–5). As already noted, gender ideals are used to categorize different types of speech, and consequently to mark the speaker as manly or effeminate.[92] Whereas gossip is considered "women's talk," teaching and prayer are connected to masculinity.[93]

The protocols of dominance and self-control are combined in the images of warfare and athletic contest that we encounter in the letters. These images represent much the same thing, since both the soldier and the athlete must train and prepare themselves (thus exercising self-control) to be

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[89] Streete, "Askesis and Resistance in the Pastoral Letters," 305.

[90] Rawson, "The Roman Family," 38–41.

[91] Streete, "Askesis and Resistance in the Pastoral Letters," 304.

[92] Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, 201.

[93] Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Prayer in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles: Intersections of Gender and Class" in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation*, ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014 (Forthcoming)).

able to win the battle, while victory (through domination of the opponent) is the ultimate goal. The life of Paul is summarized in the expression "I have fought the good fight" (τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγώνισμαι, 2 Tim 4:7), and Timothy is likewise encouraged to "fight the good fight" (στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν, 1 Tim 1:18; ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως, 1 Tim 6:12). Timothy is also encouraged to train himself in godliness (Γύμναζε δὲ σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν, 1 Tim 4:7). While στρατεύω refers to military battle, ἀγωνίζομαι and γυμνάζω allude to athletic training and competition.[94] The soldier metaphor has the additional value of referring to a strict hierarchical organization with a clear chain of command, which is so essential to the *oikos* ideology of the Pastorals. The athletic image, on the other hand, plays on the prize promised for the one who finishes victoriously (2 Tim 2:5; 4:8). The prize held up for Timothy is salvation and eternal glory (2 Tim 2:10). The manly fighter is even called "the man of God," and his reward is eternal life:

> But as for you, man of God [ὦ ἄνθρωπε θεοῦ], shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life [τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς], to which you were called and for which you made the good confession [ὡμολόγησας τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν] in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> (1 Tim 6:11–14)

Paul's fight may also have affinities with the gladiator's. In 2 Tim 4, the writer creates an image of a Paul, imprisoned and deserted by so-called friends, who has even fought the beasts: "But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth" (2 Tim 4:17). Robert Seesengood argues that the Pastorals, by switching between the metaphors of athlete, soldier and prisoner, make "an oblique but unmistakable reference to the figure of the gladiator."[95] As a soldier, athlete and

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[94] Στρατεύω: "serve in the army, wage battle, fight," BDAG; ἀγωνίζομαι: "of a(n athletic) contest, lit. and fig. engage in a contest," BDAG; γυμνάζω: "to train, undergo discipline," BDAG. Dibelius and Conzelmann point out that this type of imagery was widely used. Philosophers compared life to military service in order to characterize the seriousness of the ethical task. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 32–33. For a thorough analysis of this imagery in the Pastorals, see Robert Paul Seesengood, *Competing Identities. The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 49–65.

[95] Seesengood, *Competing Identities. The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christianity*, 52.

gladiator, Paul, a true "man of God," has fought the good fight and received the prize. Note that in the above quotation manliness and strength come from God, and are connected with the proclamation of the gospel. Salvation, as noted before, is somehow related to this struggle of proclamation and instruction. The masculinity of the Pastorals can be summed up in the following quotation, where fatherhood images, teaching roles, military metaphors and athletic competition converge:

> You then, my child, be strong [ἐνδυναμοῦ] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. Share in suffering like a good soldier [στρατιώτης] of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army [στρατευόμενος] gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer [τῷ στρατολογήσαντι]. And in the case of an athlete [ἀθλῇ], no one is crowned [στεφανοῦται] without competing according to the rules. (2 Tim 2:1–5)

To the Pastor's mind, strict kyriarchal ordering as well as strong self-discipline is necessary in shaping the ideal man. And this masculine performance is crucial for the man who seeks salvation. At the end of this struggle—whether conceived of as warfare or as athletic competition—is the reward, the "crown" of eternal life.

Slaves and Constructions of Gender

Just as the ideal man is a householder, the ideal woman is the wife or widowed wife of a householder. The terms that are used in the passages concerning women, such as γυνή (1 Tim 2:9–15; 3:11–12; 5:9), οἰκοδεσποτέω, (1 Tim 5:14) and οἰκουργός (Tit 2:5), make it clear that it is free women who are in view in these passages. In the kyriarchal structure of the household she is submitted to her husband, but in a superior position in relation to her children, slaves and other dependants.

Slaves are targeted directly in two instances in the Pastorals:

> Let all who are under the yoke of slavery [ὑπὸ ζυγὸν δοῦλοι] regard their masters [τοὺς ἰδίους δεσπότας] as worthy of all honor [πάσης τιμῆς], so that the name of God and the teaching [ἡ διδασκαλία] may not be blasphemed [βλασφημῆται]. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful [καταφρονείτωσαν] to them on the ground that they are members of the church [ὅτι ἀδελφοί εἰσιν]; rather they must serve them all the more [μᾶλλον δουλευέτωσαν], since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved [πιστοί εἰσιν καὶ ἀγαπητοί]. (1 Tim 6:1–2)

> Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters [δούλους ἰδίοις δεσπόταις ὑποτάσσεσθαι] and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back [μὴ

> ἀντιλέγοντας], not to pilfer [μὴ νοσφιζομένους], but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament [κοσμῶσιν] to the doctrine of God our Savior [τὴν διδασκαλίαν τὴν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ].
> (Tit 2:9–10)

Female slaves are not singled out for specific attention in these passages. Slaves seem to be, in a sense, genderless, since they are called δοῦλοι, in the plural, without any gender differentiation. Whereas a free woman's duty was to bear citizen children, slaves, whether male or female, were to provide for their masters' daily needs.[96] Nevertheless, the lives of female slaves were in many particulars different to those of male slaves. Their sex made them especially vulnerable to violence and sexual assault and their labor was often reproductive, as I noted in Chapter Two. Female slaves gave birth to slave children, and thus regenerated the slave population. They could also serve as wet-nurses for their masters' children. Many slave women worked as prostitutes, thus serving both a sexual and a reproductive purpose with their bodies. In the Pastorals, female slaves (as well as male) are subordinated to free women, since the wife of the household rules over the slaves together with and in compliance with her husband. The Pastor specifically instructs women to "rule their households" (οἰκοδεσποτέω, 1 Tim 5:14; οἰκουργός, Tit 2:5). Presumably this instruction includes organizing and instructing household slaves. Women are thus, in the Pastorals, kyriarchically organized in relation to each other according to axes of age—where respect is due to older women "as mothers"—and class—whereby slave is subjected to free.

In addition to the two direct exhortations to slaves, God is referred to as a δεσπότης in the Pastoral Epistles: "In a large house [οἰκίᾳ] there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for special use, some for ordinary. All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house [τῷ δεσπότῃ], ready for every good work." (2 Tim 2:20–21) This image of vessels, drawing on the overarching "Household of God"-model, likens all members of the believing community to objects useful for the owner—God. But in antiquity it was particularly slaves that were thought of as both human and chattel; as a "speaking instrument" or an "animate piece of property."[97] The suggestion that those who cleanse themselves can

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[96] Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, 42.

[97] The quotations are from Varro (*De re rustica* 1.17.1) and Aristotle (*Pol.* 1253b) respectively. See William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

be special contradicts the fact that the *oikos* ideology strictly regulates the roles in the *ekklesia* according to class, age and gender. What kind of "vessels" believers can become depends not only on whether they cleanse themselves, but on where they are located in the kyriarchally stratified οἶκος θεου.

As I noted earlier, there is a change from the genuine Pauline letters to the Pastorals in the use of body and household imagery. The Pastorals use household language as the structuring paradigm for the believing community. Davies understands this change as a change in focus from community to individuals. Salvation is understood, she argues, as a training that each individual undertakes for personal progress.[98] The image of training "emphasises the responsibility since, as in bodily training, no one else can undertake the spiritual training required."[99] I agree with Davies that training is an important concept in relation to salvation, as I have argued above. But I would question the notion that there is an increased focus on individuals in the Pastorals. As I have shown in the foregoing analysis, the *oikos* ideology still provides a focus on community. But it is a more clearly hierarchically organized community than that of the Pauline letters, since instructions are directed at specific subgroups within the community, i.e. older and younger men, widows, married women, slaves, children. The types of training one can undertake are governed by the taxonomy of the household, as Streete has argued: "The author of the Pastoral Epistles belongs to an ascetic practice that creates not individual spiritual 'champions' but a completely disciplined community of 'households' within a household (the church)."[100] *Askesis* in the Pastorals is about finding one's place in the household of God. In the next section I will determine the discursive "place" of childbearing women in the Pastorals by way of an exegesis of 1 Tim 2:8–3:1a.

Salvation and Childbearing in the Pastoral Epistles

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the interpretation of this passage is still disputed. Scholars still struggle to understand what "σωθήσεταὶ … διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας" as well as other particulars might mean. There is also scholarly contention about what might have caused these instructions. As I have pointed out, gender discourse and salvation discourse intersect in 1 Tim

98 Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 57–58.
99 Davies, *The Pastoral Epistles. I and II Timothy and Titus*, 35.
100 Streete, "Askesis and Resistance in the Pastoral Letters," 313.

2:15. What is the discursive location of the statement that "woman will be saved through childbearing"? Can we trace its influences? What is it trying to achieve?

The Context of the Passage

First, the passage must be placed in its textual context. It occurs fairly early in the letter. 1 Tim 1 has introduced the main players and themes of the letter: Paul and Timothy represent the "sound teaching" (ἡ ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία, 1 Tim 1:10) by authority of God and Christ. But there are also some who teach a different doctrine (ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν, 1:3), among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, who belong, according to the letter writer, on the side of Satan. Conflicting ideas about the teaching are central to this discourse, and it is claimed that the conflicting party is disrupting God's order or household management (οἰκονομία θεοῦ, 1:4). That is why the following instructions (ἡ παραγγελία) are given (1:18). These instructions begin in 1 Tim 2 (παρακαλῶ, 2:1): Prayers and supplications should be made for everyone, especially kings and rulers (2:1–2). The string of exhortations is briefly broken by a kerygmatic statement in vv. 3–7:

> This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ] who desires everyone to be saved [πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι] and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
>
> For there is one God;
> there is also one mediator between God and humankind,
> Christ Jesus, himself human,
> who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time.
>
> For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle [κῆρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος]—I am telling the truth, I am not lying [οὐ ψεύδομαι]—a teacher [διδάσκαλος] of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

This kerygmatic statement, highlighting God as Savior and Christ as mediator and ransom, ends with a brief reminder that God has instituted Paul in his role as herald, apostle and teacher. The introduction thus points forward to the central message of salvation and underlines the authority Paul has to transmit both the *kerygma* and the *paraenesis*.[101]

Our pericope, the instructions on the comportment of men when they pray (2:8) and the instructions on women (2:9–3:1a), follows immediately after this. Following this pericope, in 1 Tim 3, are the instructions for

[101] Krause, *1 Timothy*, 49.

overseers (ἐπισκοπή, 3:1b–3:7), who seem to be all male, and for servers (διάκονος, 3:8–13), both male and female. This part of the letter ends with an explication of why the letter is written, followed by another kerygmatic statement (3:14–16), often thought to contain the central message of the letter:[102]

> I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions [ταῦτα] to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God [οἴκῳ θεοῦ], which is the church of the living God [ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος], the pillar and bulwark of the truth. (1 Tim 3:14–15)

Men's Temper and Women's Dress

The first instruction in this pericope is on the attitude of men at prayer:

> Βούλομαι οὖν προσεύχεσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἐπαίροντας ὁσίους χεῖρας χωρὶς ὀργῆς καὶ διαλογισμοῦ.
>
> Therefore, I want the men to pray, in every place, lifting up holy hands without anger and argument.[103] (1 Tim 2:8)

The exhortation to men, to pray "without anger and argument" is most commonly understood as instructions for the worship service.[104] Some claim that when the focus shifts to women in 2:9 the notion of a situation of prayer fades away, and the text seems to concern women's behavior in general.[105] However, the instructions to men seem very general, too; most likely, this kind of behavior—to refrain from anger and argument—should be avoided outside the prayer situation as well. The ideal of quiet virtues has already been introduced in the exhortation to pray for kings and rulers "so that we may live a quiet and peaceable life" (ἤρεμον καὶ ἡσύχιον βίον, 2:2). In

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[102] Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, 107–110; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 72.

[103] This and the following translations of 1 Tim 2:8–3:1a are mine.

[104] Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 44.

[105] For a wider setting, see Krause, *1 Timothy*, 53, 55; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 46. For a setting of worship see the following: Dibelius and Conzelmann regard the passage as traditional material originally referring to women's lives in general, but "here doubtless is intended for the worship service." Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 45. Quinn and Wacker posit a church order as the underlying source and regard the unit 2:8–3:1a as instructions on public worship. They translate v. 11b: "Let a married woman quietly learn in the assemblies of worship." Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 220–221. See also Ulrike Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes." Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik des Pastoralbriefe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 69.

fact, as was pointed out above, these instructions reflect important aspects of the Pastorals' masculinity. Men should control their temper, and their speech should be truthful and peaceful. The prepositional phrase "in every place" could also signal that this is the virtuous attitude for men regardless of situation, wherever they are. As was also noted earlier, the boundaries between *oikos* and *ekklesia* are blurred by the *oikos* ideology: how you behave at home is how you should behave in church. Thus, it is my contention that neither the instructions for men nor those for women should be regarded as restricted to a setting of prayer or community worship. I regard this as one of the instances where the *oikos* ideology blurs the boundaries between household and community. On the other hand, this might not make a difference, since the same type of behavior seems to be expected in both contexts. My point is that the instructions cannot be narrowed down to only a worship context. The conclusion in verse 15, with the statement about women's salvation, also signals that more than behavior during the worship service is under discussion here.

When the attention turns to women in the following verses, their clothing is the first topic given attention:

> Ὡσαύτως [καὶ] γυναῖκας ἐν καταστολῇ κοσμίῳ μετὰ αἰδοῦς καὶ σωφροσύνης κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς, μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν καὶ χρυσίῳ ἢ μαργαρίταις ἢ ἱματισμῷ πολυτελεῖ, ἀλλ' ὃ πρέπει γυναιξὶν ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσέβειαν, δι' ἔργων ἀγαθῶν.
>
> Likewise (I want) women to adorn themselves in respectable clothing, with a sense of shame and with modesty; not with braids, gold, pearls or expensive garments, but with what is fitting for women who profess piety, through good works. (1 Tim 2:9–10)

Starting with "likewise" and lacking a main verb, this sentence is grammatically linked to the previous statement. In verse 8, the writer wants (βούλομαι) men "to pray" (προσεύχεσθαι τοὺς ἄνδρας). Verse 9 has a similar grammatical construction of accusative with infinitive (γυναῖκας … κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς). Thus, this clause is most likely also controlled by βούλομαι from verse 8.[106] From men's behavior, the writer turns to women's behavior, comparing these two groups. As I have argued above, the ideal woman in the Pastorals is a free, married woman, and it is this woman that is described here. The pious

[106] Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 57; Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 199. Dibelius and Conzelmann argue that προσεύχεσθαι too should be added from v. 8, as the regulations are "doubtless intended for the worship service." Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 45.

woman who does good works can be recognized by her respectable clothing and lack of adornment. How women dress reveals something about their moral nature, according to this passage. Gold, pearls and elaborately braided hair should not adorn a woman, but she should put on virtues instead.

The connection between adornment and immorality on the one hand, and "a plain look" and moral superiority on the other, became a *typos* in Greco-Roman literature in this period.[107] As I noted in Chapter Two, women of the Imperial family were often portrayed in very modest outfits, and Seneca constructed his modest and well behaved mother as a contrast to adulterous and abortion-seeking women who painted their faces with make-up, and were scantily clad. Authors such as Plutarch and Philo also draw a connection between modest dress and sexual modesty. Plutarch's *Advice to Bride and Groom* is well known for the views presented there about the ideal wife:

> It is not gold or precious stones or scarlet that makes her such, but whatever invests her with that something which betokens dignity (σεμνότης), good behaviour (εὐταξία), and modesty (αἰδώς). (*Conj. praec.* 141e [Babbitt, LCL])

A pleasing side effect of modest dress, it appears, is that women tend to stay more indoors: "most women, if you take from them gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple, and pearls, stay indoors," (*Conj. praec.* 142c). The way a woman dresses not only says something about her own modesty and decency, but also reflects honor or shame on her husband.[108] The moral opposite of the modestly dressed, virtuous woman is the prostitute. Philo describes a harlot as "being a person alienated from good order (κοσμιότης), and modesty (αἰδώς), and chastity (σωφροσύνη)" (*Spec. Laws* 3.51 [Colson, LCL]). The sexual deviation in women who do not possess these virtues is here at the forefront. It should be noted that Philo's invective towards deviating women also follows a class logic. The upper-class matron and the socially inferior (usually slave) prostitute, are in his eyes moral opposites.

The term καταστολή has both a concrete and and an abstract meaning. It can either mean "something to cover the body," or the character one exhibits in personal deportment.[109] This dual possibility of meaning is exploited here:

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[107] Alicia J. Batten, "Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9; 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity," *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009): 486.

[108] Batten, "Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9; 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity," 486–487.

[109] "Outward attire, either the character one exhibits in personal deportment or something to cover the body," BDAG. "Equipment, dress; modesty, reserve," LSJ.

A woman's virtues should be her "outfit." But to adorn oneself with virtue also means *not* to put on pearls or expensive clothing. The rhetoric in these verses is similar to what we find in another Christian *haustafel* concerned with women's dress and behavior, 1 Pet 3:1–4:

> Wives [γυναῖκες], in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands [ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν], so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word [ἄνευ λόγου] by their wives' conduct [διὰ τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀναστροφῆς], when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair [ἐμπλοκῆς τριχῶν], and by wearing gold ornaments [χρυσίων] or fine clothing [ἱματίων]; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit [πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος], which is very precious [πολυτελές] in God's sight.

In this passage it is explicitly the women's own husbands who can be won over by their wives' reverent behavior. This is different from the passage in 1 Timothy, which states that women's behavior and dress should be respectable, without any other immediate reason than because it is "fitting" for a believing woman. The similarity between the passages is nevertheless striking in the comparison between outward and inner beauty and wealth. They are also similar in that they connect the respectable woman with submission and silence in relation to men.

What is so provocative about a woman adorned with gold and pearls? Are gold, pearls, braids and costly garments the Greco-Roman equivalent of a skimpy skirt or a Gucci purse? Exegetes disagree about whether the main focus is on ostentation—women should not show off their wealth—or whether it concerns prudence—women should not dress immodestly. Many interpreters emphasize the notion of ostentation in their readings.[110] Some even claim that a group of rich women constituted a problem that the writer is trying to solve by means of his instructions. Witherington argues that the text is dealing with women of high social status who, by wearing gold and pearls and hair piled high, are distracting the worship service: "Hairstyles featuring reflective items such as gold or pearls would be a regular distraction from the proper focus of worship. Paul … is arguing against ostentatious, flashy and distracting apparel."[111] The Latin American

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[110] See e.g. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 205; Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 218–219; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 58; Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 370.

[111] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 225. Elsa Tamez, *Struggles*

feminist and liberation theologian Elsa Tamez also argues that the focus is on wealth rather than on promiscuity: "This prohibition [i.e. to teach in vv. 11–12], although surely directed to all women, is related to or rather is motivated or provoked by certain wealthy women who are asked not to be ostentatious in their dress."[112]

Other interpreations stress deviant sexuality.[113] As I noted above, the themes of ostentation and sexual immorality are intertwined in many Greco-Roman texts. I would argue that this is the case also here. Σωφροσύνη, when used about women, has a particular emphasis on sexual modesty. Ulrike Wagener argues that all the terms employed for the pious woman (καταστολή κοσμία, αἰδώς, σωφροσύνη), have connotations of sexual modesty.[114] The prostitute described by Philo lacks these same virtues (κοσμιότης, αἰδώς, σωφροσύνη). The Pastorals thus partake in a Greco-Roman discourse which labels the woman who deviates from the norm as lacking in self-control (σωφροσύνη). Indulging in excess in clothing and jewelry insinuates that she is also sexually out of bounds. The repeated use of this term, in both verses 9 and 15, puts sexuality rather than ostentation at the forefront.[115] The ensuing discussion of Eve's sin and the connection to τεκνογονία in verse 15 also shows that something more than ostentation is at stake.

Bruce Winter has suggested that the mode of dress described here "signaled to others a sexually lax life-style."[116] He argues that a "new breed of women" with a promiscuous lifestyle emerged in the Roman Empire in the first century CE. The author is taking preventive measures here out of con-

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for Power in Early Christianity. A Study of the First Letter to Timothy, trans. Gloria Kinsler (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 3.

[112] Tamez, *Struggles for Power in Early Christianity. A Study of the First Letter to Timothy*, 3. Tamez reads the text from a liberation perspective, employing feminist and contextual approaches. Her objective is: "to reconstruct the situation behind the text to better understand the discourse and to be able to dissent from those parts of the letter that opress persons and veer away from the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Tamez, *Struggles for Power in Early Christianity. A Study of the First Letter to Timothy*, xx.

[113] Annette Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2004), 279; Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes." Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik des Pastoralbriefe*, 82.

[114] Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes." Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik des Pastoralbriefe*, 82.

[115] Krause, *1 Timothy*, 56–57; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 46.

[116] Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows. The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*, 108.

cern for "the possible influence on that community of the norms of the 'new woman.'"[117] Although I think Winter is right in his stress on sexuality as the "problem" under attack, he takes Greco-Roman sources about women's behavior at face value, thus regarding women's promiscuous behavior as a "real" problem rather than a textual construction. Such a reading, which fails to see the power relations in the text, is quite problematic and has been rightly criticized.[118] More caution is called for, since these are elite male-authored and male-centered texts with a specific interest in presenting women in a certain way.[119]

The concluding remark on women's dress is that "good works" (ἔργα ἀγαθά) should be godly women's attire. Is it possible to read what follows in verses 11–15 as a further elaboration on the deeds of the godly woman? Annette Merz understands the following verses as an exposition on the meaning of "good works" for women.[120] One might expect, then, that learning in silence and being in submission, as well as bearing children (τεκνογονία, v. 15), form part of the duties of the godly woman, since these are the positive actions that are singled out. The joint theme of learning and teaching is the focus of the following verses. Here, too, gender distinctions seem to be called for.

Kyriarchally Stratified Teaching Roles

In the following verses there is a change of focus from clothing to teaching/learning and authority/submission, though the concern is still for what is proper for women:

> Γυνὴ ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ· διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.
>
> A woman must learn in silence with complete submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but she should be in silence. (1 Tim 2:11–12)

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[117] Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows. The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*, 120.

[118] See e.g. Jennifer Wright Knust, "Review of Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*," *Review of Biblical Literature* [http://www.bookreviews.org] (2004); Kartzow and Solevåg, "Who Loves The Pastorals and Why?".

[119] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 32–33.

[120] Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe*, 279–291.

Many researchers have recognized the chiastic construction of these two verses, starting and ending with silence (ἡσυχία)[121] and establishing teaching as the central concern.[122] It is also noteworthy how the tone becomes more severe. From a wish (βούλομαι) for a certain kind of conduct in the previous verses, there is now a clear prohibition (οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω). Finally, it should be noted that the subject shifts from the plural, γυναῖκες, to the single, γυνή.

Scholars have discussed the scope of the prohibition. Some find a limitation in γυνή, arguing that it concerns only the relationship between husband and wife.[123] Others see a limitation in the setting, claiming that it pertains only to the worship service.[124] These two limitations can also be combined, so that the issue becomes married women's behavior in the public worship service.[125] I have argued above that both *oikos* and *ekklesia* are governed by the same rules of behavior in the Pastorals. The *oikos* ideology of these letters blurs the boundaries between household and community and basically expects the same type of behavior in both settings. Thus, women must be silent and yield authority to their respective husbands or heads of households, as well as to male leaders in the *ekklesia*, at home, as well as during the worship service. The ideal woman in the Pastorals is a married woman or an elderly widow. As long as she is of childbearing age, she should be married; only if she is past sixty are there exceptions (cf. 1 Tim 5:9–14). The women under consideration in verses 9–15 are these idealized women.

The two important virtues here are silence (ἡσυχία) and submission (ὑποταγή). The quiet and meek disposition of the kyriarchally submissive partner, whether wife to husband (ἡσυχία, 1 Tim 2:11–12), slave to master (μὴ ἀντιλέγοντος, Tit 2:9), child to father (σεμνότης, 1 Tim 3:4; μὴ ἀνυπότακτος, Tit 1:6), or citizen to ruler (ἤρεμος καὶ ἡσύχιος, 1 Tim 2:1), is a recurring theme in the Pastorals. The household codes in 1 Pet 3:1; Eph 5:22–24; Col 3:18 are all concerned with the submission of the wife to the husband, but the parallel

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121 Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 59; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 47.

122 Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 59.

123 Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 200.

124 MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches. A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, 223; Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes." Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik des Pastoralbriefe*, 69; Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*.

125 Quinn and Wacker call 1 Tim 2:12 "the apostolic veto on a wife's teaching in the liturgical assembly," Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 225. See also Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 191, 201, 12–13.

theme of learning and teaching is not present in any of these. The inclusion of this topic reflects the two-tiered structure of the household of God in the Pastorals. There seem to be two activities that are prohibited: to teach (διδάσκω) and to assume authority (αὐθεντέω).[126] How does this prohibition relate to other instances in the Pastorals where it seems that women are allowed to teach, at least in some limited fashion?

As noted above, Tit 2:3 says that women should be καλοδιδάσκαλοι—teachers of what is good. Further, 2 Tim 1:5 gives credit to Timothy's mother and grandmother who have been forbears of Timothy's faith. Some claim that women's instruction is reduced in the Pastorals to instructions *on* behavior; women are allowed only to teach the proper roles of wives, childbearers and housekeepers.[127] According to Bassler, for example, the instructions to older women in Tit 2:3 differ from the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:11–12 "in a number of ways. It was done in the context of the home, not the worship service; it concerned only domestic issues, not doctrinal ones; and the students were young women, not the church at large."[128] Perhaps there is a more dynamic relationship between teaching and good deeds, in which the one leads to the other, or where one is a proof that the other is in place. As I have argued above, both doctrine and behavior are closely linked to the possibility of achieving salvation. Both behavior and right instruction need to be present in order for one to be within the realm of salvation.

That women should be teachers does not seem to be a problem as long as the teaching is regulated by the hierarchical structure of the household and the teaching conforms to this ideal.[129] Women have a role as teachers as long as it takes place within the proper guidelines of authority and submission. It is thus not the overall category of teaching that is prohibited for women with the expression διδάσκειν … οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν, I would suggest, but teaching *men* and thus breaking the gendered code of behavior embedded in the *oikos* ideology: "I do not permit a woman to teach (a man) or exercise authority over a man." A woman can teach, within proper boundaries, but she can neither teach a man nor rule over him, neither her own husband nor any other (authoritative, kyriarchal) man in the community. This

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126 Αὐθεντέω: "To assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to," BDAG.

127 Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 374.

128 Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 194.

129 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 290.

would mean that women can teach both good deeds and sound doctrine, but only to other women, children and slaves (of both sexes). Such a kyriarchically restricted teaching responsibility may be glimpsed, I suggest, in the exemplary role models of Timothy's mother and grandmother, who have raised Timothy in the faith (2 Tim 1:5, 3:15), and in the instructions that older women should teach the younger (Tit 2:3–5). Perhaps there is also a teaching function connected to the women (married to?) servers (1 Tim 3:11) and the widows (1 Tim 5:3–16), although the focus is on restricting rather than encouraging speech.

Krause has pointed out that restriction on speech is the link between the instructions for men in verse 8 and for women in verses 9–15: "in both cases limitations are being placed on both groups and their practice of speaking."[130] However, the restrictions are different, and related to the wider gender discourse: men should not speak with anger and women should not teach or assume authority over men. In this respect, the restrictions on women's speech can be fruitfully considered in relation to the statement on women and silence in 1 Cor 14:33–35. The combination of the themes teaching/learning and authority/submission is also present there:

> For God is a God not of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches [ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις] of the saints, women should be silent [σιγάτωσαν] in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak [οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν], but should be subordinate [ὑποτασσέσθωσαν], as the law [ὁ νόμος] also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands [τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας] at home. For it is shameful [αἰσχρὸν] for a woman to speak in church [γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ]. (1 Cor 14:33–35)

As in 1 Timothy, there is a prohibition (οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται) directed to women. Silence and subordination are the key virtues here too, although the terms are somewhat different. In 1 Corinthians, the imperative of the verbs "to keep silent" (σιγάω) and "to subordinate" (ὑποτάσσω) are used, rather than ἡσυχία and ὑποταγή. But the behavior that is condemned seems to be the same: speaking (λαλέω, v. 34) and learning (μανθάνω, v. 35).[131] The gender discourse here is thus very similar to that in the Pastorals. Considering that such ideas about gender were dominant in the Greco-Roman context, this

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[130] Krause, *1 Timothy*, 55.

[131] See Annette Merz for an analysis of the similarities in language and meaning between the two passages. She understands the connection between them as one of intertextuality, where the author in 1 Tim 2:11 ff. is trying to clarify what Paul meant in 1 Cor 14:34 ff. Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe*, 334–339.

should not be surprising, and there is no need to explain the similarities by way of an interpolation hypothesis.[132] Jorunn Økland has argued convincingly that in 1 Cor 11–14, Paul's primary concern is to distinguish between *oikia* and *ekklesia* space. As I have argued, the two-tiered *oikos* model of the Pastorals conciously blurs, rather than distinguishes, *oikos* and *ekklesia* space. While the problem in 1 Cor 14 seems to be women's behavior in the public worship service,[133] the focus in 1 Tim 2 is, as I have argued, on godly women's behavior in general, wherever they are. The solution in both cases is a restriction of women's speech. Interestingly, both also use an argument from scripture for their prohibitions. In 1 Corinthians the Torah (ὁ νόμος) is referred to as authoritative,[134] in 1 Tim 2 the creation story from the Torah is brought into the argument.

The Gullibility of Women

To support what has been said so far, scripture is interpreted:

> Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὔα. καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν·
>
> For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was seduced and fell into transgression. (1 Tim 2:13–14)

The story about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2–3) is presented as an argument for why it is right that women should be silent and submissive, known for good deeds rather than for provocative clothing. In addition to his argument from custom (what is "fitting for women," v. 10), the author of the Pastorals specifically draws on the Judaeo-Christian creation story to argue for a certain female role. Genesis 2–3 is clearly part of the "sacred writings" referred to in 2 Tim 3:15, and is here interpreted to support the

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[132] Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 150. See also Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets. A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*, 149–153. On the other hand, Balch and Osiek argue strongly for the interpolation hypothesis. See Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World. Households and House Churches* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 117.

[133] According to Økland: "In 1 Cor 14:34–35 the already established distinction between the space of *oikos* and that of the *ekklesia* is made again. This time it is not the eating practices that should be clearly distinguishable in the two spaces, but the speaking practices of women." Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 151.

[134] Økland, *Women in Their Place. Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, 204.

author's *oikos* ideology. The biblical backing for women's submission to men is, according to the Pastorals, twofold: Adam was formed first, *and* Adam was not deceived.

The choice of words in verses 13–14 draws heavily on the language in the LXX, using many of the same verbs. According to Gen 2:7, God created Adam by forming him out of dust. The same verb (πλάσσω) is used here. In Gen 3:13 the woman admits that "the serpent tricked me [ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν με]." In the Pastorals passage, the same verb is used to insist that Adam was *not* deceived (ἀπατάω). The second reference to Eve, in verse 14, simply as γυνή, also mimics the LXX phrasing. Eve is just called ἡ γυνή until Gen 3:20 when Adam names her as his first action after God's curses. By switching from Eve to γυνή in verse 14, this statement is connected to the preceding verses, where γυνή (first in the plural, then in the singular) has been a recurring word. Thus, women in general are connected to the primordial woman.

In Gen 3, the serpent, the woman and the man are all punished for their transgressions. According to Genesis, a woman is to bear children in pain (ἐν λύπαις τέξῃ τέκνα, 3:16a) and her husband is to rule over her (αὐτός σου κυριεύσει, 3:16b). Even though Eve's punishment is not specifically mentioned in the Pastorals passage, these connections to submission and childbearing are probably the reason why the story is invoked here. That her husband is to rule over her can be heard in the call for submission in verses 11–12, and childbearing is the focus of verse 15.

The first claim, that Adam was formed first, refers to the temporal priority of Adam's creation according to Gen 2. God forms the man from dust (2:7), plants a garden (2:8–9), creates the animals (2:19), and finally makes woman out of man's own rib (2:21–22). To use temporal priority as an argument for relational superiority was quite common in Jewish and early Christian exegesis.[135] A similar argument for the superiority of Adam, and thus of men, because of the order of creation can be found in Paul: "Indeed, man was not made from woman [ἀνὴρ ἐκ γυναικός], but woman from [man γυνὴ ἐξ ἀνδρός]. Neither was man created for the sake of woman [ἀνὴρ διὰ τὴν γυναῖκα], but woman for the sake of man [γυνὴ διὰ τὸν ἄνδρα] (1 Cor 11:8–9)."

The second claim, that woman was deceived but Adam was not, represents a rather tendentious reading of Gen 3. In the biblical passage God explicitly chastises and curses the man; "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil

[135] Krause, *1 Timothy*, 60.

you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (3:17). Still, the Pastor claims that Adam was not deceived. Eve, on the other hand was thoroughly deceived (ἐξαπατάω), or perhaps she was seduced? The composite form of the verb, ἐξ-απατάω, carries both meanings.[136] As I noted in Chapter Two, Eve's particular deception and sin became a topic of concern in Hellenistic Jewish Genesis interpretation. In some of these texts, the transgression seems to be understood sexually, as a seduction of Eve by the snake.[137] More than forty years ago, Anthony Tyrrell Hanson suggested that such a tradition, found e.g. in 4 Maccabees, lies behind the curious statements in 1 Tim 2:13–15. On the basis of these Jewish and early Christian texts, Hanson drew the conclusion that Eve's transgression should be understood as sexual in verse 14.[138] While most commentaries have a footnote reference to Hanson's article, few have taken up his suggestion.

Let us look at some of these texts. The claim that Eve was deceived but Adam was not is similar to a statement in 2 Enoch: "And that is why he thought up the scheme against Adam. In such a form he entered parardise, and corrupted Eve. But Adam he did not contact." (31:6).[139] The Greek and Latin versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* are consistent with the idea of seduction.[140] As noted in Chapter Two, these texts imply that the first sin was lust, not pride, and that Eve was more to blame than Adam. The notion of a sexual seduction emerges quite explicitly in 4 Maccabees:

> I was a pure virgin and did not go outside my father's house; but I guarded the rib from which woman was made. No seducer [λυμεών] corrupted me on a desert plain, nor did the destroyer, the deceitful serpent [λυμεὼν ἀπάτης ὄφις], defile the purity of my virginity [τὰ ἁγνὰ τῆς παρθενίας]. (4 Macc 18:7–8)

The mother of the seven sons looks back on her youth and contrasts her own chaste behavior to that of Eve. She was not seduced, and her virginity was not defiled, implicitly in contrast to Eve.

Furthermore, traces of this gender discourse can be found in early Christian texts, for example, in Paul's only reference to Eve. This occurs in 2 Corinthians, in a context in which Paul is arguing for his authority as apostle to the Corinthians against other apostles:

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136 Ἐξαπατάω: "deceive or beguile, deceive thoroughly"; "seduce a woman," LSJ.

137 Anthony Tyrell Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1968), 65–66; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 48.

138 Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles*, 76.

139 Translation taken from James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983).

140 Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles*, 69.

> I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived [ἐξηπάτησεν] Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Cor 11:2–3)

This is the only New Testament reference to Eve besides 1 Tim 2:13. Paul is here using the metaphor of betrothal to explain his relationship with the Corinthians. Paul is the father and the Corinthian congregation is the virgin bride in danger of being seduced by a deceitful lover. As Eve was deceived by the serpent, so will the so-called superapostles deceive the Corinthian congregation.[141] As Eve's virginity was lost, so will the Corinthians' fidelity to Christ be lost. It seems reasonable to assume that the fall is here envisaged in terms of sexual seduction.

In the *Protevangelium of James* we find another reference to this tradition. This second-century narrative elaborates on the story of Mary's conception of Jesus, and her virginity is the central issue.[142] According to the *Protevangelium*, Mary was kept safe from her childhood onwards in the temple of Jerusalem, but when she reached puberty she was married to Joseph. Before assuming sexual relations with her, Joseph goes away on a journey, and upon returning six months later finds her pregnant. There is no end to his distress as he laments the situation:

> What prayer shall I offer for this maiden? For I received her as a virgin out of the temple of the Lord my God and have not protected her. Who has deceived [θηρεύσας] me? Who has done this evil in my house and defiled the virgin? Has the story of Adam been repeated in me? For as Adam was absent in the hour of his prayer and the serpent came and found Eve alone and deceived [ἐξηπάτησεν] her, so also has it happened to me. (*Prot. Jas.* 13:3–5)

In this passage it is quite clear that Eve's deception is understood as a sexual seduction by the snake. The use of this tradition in the *Protevangelium* indicates that the idea of Eve's sexual seduction was taken up and elaborated in various Christian settings in the first and second centuries CE. The Greek verb used here, ἐξαπατάω, is the same that Paul uses when he refers to Eve's deception. As already noted, the verb can refer to sexual seduction as well as deception. Interestingly, another verb is used for the deception or trickery that Joseph and, by analogy, Adam experienced. Θηρεύω means "to hunt"[143] and thus bears entirely different connotations, far from the semantic field

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[141] Hanson, *Studies in the Pastoral Epistles*, 70–71.

[142] Hock dates it between 150 and 200 CE. Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1995), 12.

[143] LSJ.

concerning illicit sex. Note also that in the *Protevangelium* it is suggested that Eve was alone when she encountered the snake and that Adam was at prayer. Similarly, in the different versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, Adam is in a different part of the Garden when the snake tricks Eve. Within the narrative this makes sense, as Adam and Eve are allotted different portions of the garden to guard.[144] However, it is quite contrary to the tale as told in Genesis:

> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate. (Gen 3:6, emphasis added)

This spatial separation between the two first humans in later retellings of the story makes it easier to imagine that there was an opportunity for illicit sex.

Returning to our passage, may these texts shed some light on the Pastor's use of Adam and Eve? In the context of verses 9–12, this biblical interpretation implies that women are more susceptible to deception, and thus supplies a reason why women should not have authority and why they should dress modestly. The devil, or the snake, is not mentioned, but is the agent of the verbs ἀπατάω and ἐξαπατάω. As noted above, the devil is called "the slanderer" (ὁ διάβολος, 1 Tim 3:6; 7; 2 Tim 2:26) in the Pastorals. Women are also exhorted not to be slanderous (μὴ διαβόλους, 1 Tim 3:11; Tit 2:3), perhaps hinting at this connection between the devil and the original woman. I find it plausible that this passage is shaped by the tradition that Eve was sexually seduced. The second part of verse 14, about woman's current state of transgression, continues to draw on this notion. According to verse 14, not only was woman deceived, but she *remains* in a state of transgression. The NRSV translates ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν with "became a transgressor," but this translation does not render the nuance in γίνομαι of "entry into a new condition."[145] The use of the perfect tense (γέγονεν), which expresses the current result of a previous action, underscores this emphasis on the continuing effect of the action,[146] which is the state of transgression or deviation (παράβασις). Due to the snake's seduction of Eve, she entered into a particular condition of transgression. This is the state all women are now in, it seems, and thus they should not be allowed to teach men.

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144 Anderson and Stone, *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 48.

145 BDAG.

146 Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 204.

Feminist research has related to Hanson's thesis in varying degrees. Some do not even consider it.[147] Bassler argues against it, claiming that, even if the *text* lends itself to such a reading, the *context* of the Pastorals does not.[148] The context Bassler presupposes is that of ascetic opponents who are winning women over to their celibate life-style:

> The best framework for understanding this rather remarkable verse is not a questionable allusion to the motif of seduction, but the clear threat of the contemporary heresy. The reference to bearing children has an obvious anti-ascetic and thus anti-heretical thrust.[149]

Luise Schottroff and Anette Merz, on the other hand, are in favor of Hanson's interpretation. Schottroff argues that this theology of creation, where Eve alone is gullible, and thus every woman is by nature "seducible seductress, unchaste and so on," is the background for the doctrine of salvation through childbearing.[150] Merz, building on Schottroff, sees a clear dependence on 2 Cor 11:2 ff., and argues that the Pastorals' author was influenced by the Hellenistic Jewish *topos* about Eve's sexual seduction.[151] Having traced the discursive trajectory of Eve in Hellenistic Jewish writings, I find it plausible that these exegetes are right: 1 Tim 2:13–14 is shaped by the tradition that Eve was sexually seduced. The argumentation in verses 13–14 ends up with the notion of a fundamental difference between men and women—a difference perhaps even thought to exist on an ontological level.[152] The author solves the problem of teaching and authority by giving biblical warrants for the silence and submission of women, but he also creates a new problem: If women are in a different condition ontologically from men, how do they get out of it? How are women saved?

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147 See e.g. Krause, *1 Timothy*; Dewey, "1 Timothy."; Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles."

148 Bassler, "Adam, Eve and the Pastor. The Use of Genesis 2–3 in the Pastoral Epistles," 50.

149 Bassler, "Adam, Eve and the Pastor. The Use of Genesis 2–3 in the Pastoral Epistles," 55. See also Wagener, for a similar position. Wagener, *Die Ordnung des "Hauses Gottes." Der Ort von Frauen in der Ekklesiologie und Ethik des Pastoralbriefe*, 108.

150 Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*, 72–73. See also Luise Schottroff, "Die befreite *Eva*. Schuld und Macht der Ohnmächtigen nach dem Neuen Testament," in *Schuld und Macht. Studen zu einer feministischen Beifreitungstheologie*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Christine Schaumberger (Munchen: 1988).

151 Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe*, 344–352.

152 Boyarin has argued for such an ontological difference between male and female in Philo. According to him, Philo, in contrast to rabbinic Judaism, introduces "the ontologically secondary status of the gendered human, and 'woman' as the name for that entity which produces gender." Boyarin, *Carnal Israel. Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, 80.

Salvation through Childbirth

The answer is given in the final verse of these instructions on women's behavior:

> σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἁγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης· Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος.
>
> But woman will be saved by means of childbearing, if they remain in faith, love and holiness with modesty. The saying is trustworthy! (1Tim 2:15–3:1a)

Verse 15 gives the solution to the state of transgression that all women are in: τεκνογονία, childbearing. There are several grammatical puzzles that need to be worked out before we can arrive at an understanding of what the verse means. The verse is difficult to understand, both lexically and syntactically. Who is the subject of σωθήσεται and how should we translate σῴζω? Does the term refer to eschatological salvation or preservation in danger? How should we understand διά in this context? What does the rare noun τεκνογονία mean? And why is there a shift from the single "*she* will be saved" (σωθήσεται) to the plural "if *they* remain" (μείνωσιν)?[153]

The coordinating conjunction δὲ connects verse 15 to the preceding clause, and probably implies that the subject of σωθήσεται is the same as in verse 14b (ἡ γυνή). The meaning of σῴζω is disputed, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter. The verb refers to salvation in a cosmic sense in all other instances in the Pastorals,[154] and, I would argue, also here. Salvation has been a recurring theme in the letter so far: Christ Jesus came to the world to save sinners (note that this is a "faithful saying", 1:15); God, our savior, wants everyone to be saved (2:3–4). The proximity of this statement to the "faithful saying" in 3:1a is also an argument in favor of a theological understanding of σῴζω. Young argues persuasively that this phrase, which occurs five times in the Pastorals, always appears in connection with a soteriological statement.[155] Moreover, a cosmic understanding fits with the logic of the passage better than a mere reference to preservation. The previous verses, which conclude that (generic) woman is in a state of transgression, call for a means of redemption. The means is τεκνογονία and a certain set of virtues.

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[153] Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1Timothy 2.15)?," 88.

[154] Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1Timothy 2.15)?," 94.

[155] Young, *The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, 56–57; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 28–29.

Concerning the preposition, the most common use of διά with the genitive denotes instrument or agency: "by means of, through, with."[156] A temporal sense ('during') is less likely if one accepts σῴζω as a salvific term. Thus, I agree with Porter that "'childbearing' is the instrument (the means or the channel) by which salvation is accomplished."[157]

Τεκνογονία is a New Testament hapax legomenon with very few usages in secular Greek. The dictionaries translate the term with "the bearing of children,"[158] or "child-bearing."[159] The term is found in a handful of medical discussions of childbearing,[160] and there are also some examples of it being used in moral-philosophical texts drawing on the household management tradition.[161] As I noted in Chapter Two, Aristotle uses the term in an assessment of the best childbearing age for women. In that passage, the focus is on women's particular role in procreation. In 1Timothy, τεκνογονία seems to echo God's first punishment in Gen 3:16, of pain in the birthing of children (τέξῃ τέκνα), thus similarly focusing on the female role in procreation, which is pregnancy and birth. In this text, then, the focus is on woman's particular role as childbearer.[162] In 1Tim 5, where the related verb is used (τεκνογονέω), it is also quite clear that to bear children is one of the fundamental roles of a woman's place in the household. To raise and to love the children are expressed by other terms (τεκνοτροφέω, 1Tim 5:10; φιλότεκνος, Tit 2:5). Hence, τεκνογονέω probably refers primarily to the birthing of children.[163]

To bear children, then, is the primary function of the respectably married woman in the Pastorals, as in the Greco-Roman context. The definite article (τῆς τεκνογονίας) should therefore be understood as generic.[164] Porter points

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156 BDAG.

157 Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1Timothy 2.15)?," 98.

158 BDAG.

159 LSJ.

160 E.g. Aristotle, *HA* 582a, Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarii*, 3.49.

161 Areius Didymus, *Liber de philosophorum sectis*, 76.1, Chrysippus, *Fragmenta moralia* 611. Both passages are identical, so they are presumably drawing on already existing material now lost. Balch argues that Areius Didymus' writings draw on the Aristotelian household management tradition. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive. The Domestic Code in 1Peter*, 40–41.

162 See Bassler, *1Timothy, 2Timothy, Titus*; Krause, *1Timothy*, 63. On the other hand, Quinn and Wacker, and Collins understand the term in a wider sense, as including child-rearing, see Quinn and Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, 231; Collins, *1 & 2Timothy and Titus. A Commentary*, 77.

163 "Bear young, bear children," LSJ. Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1Timothy 2.15)?," 96.

164 Porter, "What does it Mean to Be 'Saved by Childbirth' (1Timothy 2.15)?," 92.

out that the definite article is used generically in 1 Tim 2:8 as well: "men [τοὺς ἄνδρας] should pray …" There is no reason to assume that the definite article refers to a particular childbirth, i.e. that of Mary giving birth to Jesus, as Ben Witherington argues,[165] since childbearing is woman's role *par excellence* in the *oikos* ideology of the Pastoral Epistles.

The grammatical challenges continue in verse 15b. Is the implied plural of generic woman made explicit with the plural verb form μείνωσιν? Or is there a shift in subject from women to the children they get through their childbearing?[166] According to the *oikos* ideology of the Pastorals, the places of children and women are somewhat similar—it is one of submission within the household (ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ, of women in 1 Tim 2:11; τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ, 1 Tim 3:4). This might explain why it is difficult to ascertain whether it refers to childbearing women or to their children—these instructions fit both groups equally well. If it pertains to children, the instructions resonate with the requirements of male leaders (1 Tim 3:4; 12) as well as female members of the *ekklesia* (1 Tim 5:10; 14, Tit 2:4–5) about the responsibility of parents to raise children in the faith. If, on the other hand, it is read as concerning women, the conditional clause (ἐὰν μείνωσιν) qualifies which women the verse is referring to—i.e., only believing women, who would have such virtues.[167] In that case, verse 15b affirms that not all women are saved through their childbearing: this must be accompanied by the Christian virtues of faith, love, holiness and modesty.[168]

The repetition of σωφροσύνη, which ties the clause to the virtue list in verse 9, persuades me to favor women rather than children as the subject. Such a reading retains a consistent subject (generic woman) throughout the passage, and also creates an *inclusio* by returning to the plural form that opened the passage (γυναῖκες, vv. 9–10). The four virtues that conclude the clause in verse 15 also form a link back to verse 9, thus creating a chiastic pattern: The passage ends where it started, with a list of valued virtues for women. There is thus a smaller chiastic pattern in verses 11–12 with the repetition of silence (ἡσυχία) and a wider one framing verses 9–15 with two sets

165 Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 230.

166 For the position that the subject changes from women to children in v. 15b, see Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, "Noen bemerkninger til 1 Tim 2,15," *Norsk teologisk tidsskrift* 84, no. 1 (1983); Horn and Martens, *"Let the little children come to me". Childhood and Children in Early Christianity*, 139–140.

167 Dibelius and Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 48.

168 Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. A Commentary*, 77.

of virtue lists (with σωφροσύνη recurring in both). The concern for modesty and chastity in women seems to both open and conclude the passage. The focus has been on women throughout this passage, and their virtues, particularly connected to sexuality, seem to be a major concern. I have noted above how the community, although stratified into groups, plays a role in the salvation economy of the Pastorals. The change back to the plural might signal that salvation is a community effort. Perhaps salvation can be reached only through the group effort of women who remain faithful to their God-given place of marriage, childbearing and housekeeping (γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, 1 Tim 5:14).

The argument has come full circle, with only one thing remaining: the exclamation mark. The textual unit that started with verse 8 ends with 3:1a:[169] "the saying is trustworthy" [πιστὸς ὁ λόγος]. Raymond Collins argues that this literary formula is attached to "religious axioms whose authority within the community is thereby endorsed."[170] It can precede or follow the material to which it is joined in much the same way as the Hebrew "Amen." As already noted, Young connects the phrase with soteriological statements. By ending the instructions with this formula, a core belief about salvation is singled out for acclamation by the hearers. Thus, it is an active attempt to shape the discourse and set the boundaries of the community.

Conclusion

In the Pastoral Epistles, the household is the model for the structure of God's *ekklesia*. This *oikos* ideology pervades the gender discourse in the Pastorals. It also blurs the boundaries between the community and the individual households. Since *oikos* and *ekklesia* are so closely intertwined, there can be no rules that address only the worship service without simultaneously addressing what goes on in the home. Thus there can be no woman assuming authority over men in the assembly at prayer, because that is not how women should behave at home either.

Despite this highly stratified understanding of proper places and roles for different social groups, salvation still seems to be understood as a commu-

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[169] Even though most commentaries place 3:1a in conjunction with 2:9–15, all modern Bible translations I am familiar with render the phrase as the beginning of the instructions for overseers.

[170] For this and the following quotation: Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. A Commentary*, 42–43.

nity undertaking. For example, the virtuous example of Timothy seems to have some sort of saving power. Timothy might be able to save both himself and others through his teaching and his examplary behavior (1 Tim 4:16). In the same way, not only will women be saved through childbearing, but others too might be saved, because that is the only way to uphold the life of the *ekklesia*. It seems that the whole teaching of these letters makes salvation dependent on childbearing and right child-rearing—the first being the responsibility of the mother, the second of both the mother *and* the kyriarchal father. The probability of someone being saved rests solely on proper household conduct. Thus the housewife, the widow, the slave, the young man and the householder must live according to their allotted places, so that the conditions for salvation can be present. Timothy is presented as an example of a man who, born of a Christian mother (2 Tim 1:5), has received the right upbringing, through his mother and grandmother, as well as from his spiritual father Paul (2 Tim 3:15–16). Now, he is a believer, a sound teacher, an example of virtuous living, and a faithful leader of the community. In a way, Timothy is saved through his mother's childbearing, as well as through Paul's *paideia*.

D'Angelo has observed that the Pastorals are particularly concerned with constructing masculinity by means of a *distinction* of male and female roles.[171] Gail Streete similarly asserts that gender-appropriate behavior is "the indication of good order" in the Pastorals.[172] Is there also a gender-specific soteriology, where men are saved through teaching and women through childbearing?[173] As I understand it, women's salvation calls for special means, because women are in a special state of transgression. On the basis of the tradition of Eve's sexual seduction by the snake, the Pastor posits an ontological difference between Adam and Eve which is then transmitted to men and women. Despite the state that all women are in due to Eve's fatal action, there is a way out. This text insists that by bearing children, women will be saved. Women's struggle in childbearing is not only a punishment or a result of the transgression (as in Gen 3), but is also part of the redemption. To be within the realm of possible salvation, a woman has to submit to marriage and potential childbearing—she must live according to

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171 D'Angelo, "'Knowing How to Preside over His Own Household': Imperial Masculinity and Christian Asceticism in the Pastorals, Hermas and Luke-Acts," 273.

172 Streete, "Askesis and Resistance in the Pastoral Letters," 300.

173 Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus. Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe*, 338.

the *oikos* ideology. To be within the realm of salvation, men too must be in the place that is assigned to them by the stratified system of the household codes.

On the one hand, one could claim that salvation is gender-specific in the Pastorals, in that each individual must conform to his or her gender-specific role in the household structure in order to be saved. Women, who are in a special state of transgression, will be saved by special means, namely through childbearing. This means fits the nature of the first transgression, which is understood as a sexual seduction of Eve by the snake. But can one also talk about specific means of salvation for children and slaves, the two other groups differentiated in the household codes? I think that the Genesis interpretation in 1 Tim 2:13–14 text gives a special, cosmological weight to the difference between women and men that cannot be found in master-slave or father-child relationships. Ecclesiologically speaking, however, children and slaves have specified places as silent and submissive persons, just like women. Does this mean that any woman who bears a child is saved and anyone who does not is condemned? What about infertile, unmarried or widowed women, one might ask? And what about slave women, who are excluded from marriage and excluded from being designated as γυνή? The application of an intersectional awareness to this reading has revealed some discrepancies in the Pastorals' soteriology. This text is not concerned with the exceptions to the rule, but with the ideal woman, who in the *oikos* ideology is a free woman and a wife. In the Pastorals, slave women thus become completely invisible.

On the other hand, one might say that not only women, but the whole community is saved through childbearing. Only when women perform their crucial role as childbearers and housekeepers (γαμεῖν, τεκνογονεῖν, οἰκοδεσποτεῖν, 1 Tim 5:14) will children be raised in the faith and community life continued. Salvation is closely linked to sound teaching and good works. I have shown how salvation seems to be dependent on both lifestyle (as organized by the *oikos* ideology) and sound teaching (as taught by an authoritative line of leaders). Further, I have argued that the restrictions on women's ability to teach and the confinement of women within the subordinating household structure are an integral part of the text's soteriology. The ideal of the patriarchal household is crucial to these letters' understanding of salvation. The concern that each individual should find her or his place in the hierarchy of the household and in the community of believers has clear implications for the ability to achieve salvation and to preach salvation. The sound teaching is something preserved and handed over through "family lineage," from Paul, the father of the community, but also from mothers and

fathers to the children and slaves in their households. The "proof" of the sound teaching is in the lifestyle—that each lives according to his or her place.

My reading of verse 15 as a statement on how women will be saved is not unprecedented. However, I differ from most interpreters when it comes to explaining why this is the case. Most scholars argue that it was formulated as a response to ascetic Christian teaching, as an attempt to preserve women's subordinate role within the patriarchal household structure.[174] I have argued that such a reconstruction of historical background is not necessary. By placing the Pastorals' discourse on childbearing within a larger discursive field, I have shown that salvation through childbearing is an integral part of the world view expressed in this text—its *oikos* ideology. This ideology is influenced by a concept of masculinity that distinguishes male and female roles and by a gender etiology based on the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden. My suggestion is that "salvation through childbearing" is better explained as a conviciton based on a supposed ontological difference between male and female, rather than as a teaching provoked by ascetic oppostion.

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174 Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 61; Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 265–266; Maloney, "The Pastoral Epistles," 370–371.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE *ACTS OF ANDREW*

Introduction

Childbearing and salvation also interface in the *Acts of Andrew*. The genre is quite different from the Pastoral Epistles, it is a narrative, not a letter collection. As I noted in Chapter One, it is important to be aware of the impact of genre in how gender is presented, but also to be aware of ideological and rhetorical structures across genres.

In this narrative there are two main converts to the apostle Andrew's preaching, Stratocles and Maximilla. The relationship between the male and the female convert, and these two characters' relationship to the apostle, will be important in this chapter. There is a childbearing scene in which the male convert, Stratocles, "gives birth" with the help of the apostle Andrew as midwife. This scene is particularly interesting from the perspective of Greco-Roman childbearing discourse, as it shows how some early Christians appropriated childbearing imagery. The central role of Maximilla, the female convert, also needs to be scrutinized, and I will argue that she is the only representative of a lifestyle of sexual renunciation in this text.

Date, Place, Authorship, Genre

The five earliest Apocryphal Acts (*Acts of John*, *Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter*, *Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas*) share many features, stylistically as well as theologically. The stories in these Acts focus on the missionary activities of a particular apostle, his preaching and miracle working, and usually end in martyrdom.[1] They are often compared to the ancient Greek novels,[2] but

[1] The exception is John in the *Acts of John*, who is not killed and seems to decide the day of his own death. Having prayed that the Lord "grant me to accomplish my journey to you, without suffering insults or abuses," he lies down in a prepared grave and "peacefully yielded up the ghost" (*Acts John* 114–115).

[2] See Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike*. See also Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*; Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*; Christine M. Thomas, *The Acts of Peter, Gospel literature, and the Ancient Novel. Rewriting the Past*

there are also similarities with Greek historiography and biographies of philosophers.[3] I follow Jean-Marc Prieur's argument that the Apocryphal Acts cannot be placed within one genre, but borrow literary motifs from several ancient genres.[4] Theologically, the Acts share an interest in chastity in some form or other, and ascribe a significant role to the apostle as a mediator between humans and God. Although there seems to be textual dependence among the Acts, there is as yet no consensus about how they should be arranged in relation to one another.[5] Although they were not written as a collection, these texts were later collected by the Manicheans.[6]

Only parts of the *Acts of Andrew* exist in Greek manuscript form, but it is believed to have been the longest of the Apocryphal Acts.[7] The beginning of the text is preserved only in a Latin redaction from the sixth century, referred to as *Gregory of Tours' Epitome* or *Liber de Miraculis Beati Andreae Apostoli*.[8] Gregory's story is a rewriting of the original *Acts of Andrew* from beginning to end, and according to Prieur it has been significantly altered in three ways: Gregory has suppressed the speeches, changed the structure of the narrative and modified the work to make its theology more catholic.[9] In his introduction Gregory explains that he has excised its "excessive verbosity" and

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight. The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 122–131. Cf. Burrus' claim that the Apocryphal Acts build on oral legends rather than the Hellenistic novel, Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy. Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* 31–60.

[3] Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 8.

[4] Jean-Marc Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, vol. 5/6, Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 403–404.

[5] Klauck suggests the following order: John, Paul, Peter, Andrew, Thomas. Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 3. MacDonald considers the *Acts of Andrew* to precede only *Acts of Thomas*, and to show literary borrowing from at least *Acts of Peter* and *Acts of John*. Dennis R. MacDonald, "Which Came First? Intertextual Relationships Among the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Semeia*, no. 80 (1997): 32–33. Concerning this discussion, see also Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 93; Jan N. Bremmer, "The Apocryphal Acts: Author, Place, Time and Readership," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2001), 154.

[6] Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 3. On the use of the *Acts of Andrew* in the Manichean tradition, see also Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 100–111.

[7] John K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 234.

[8] Jean-Marc Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew. Introduction," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991), 103. There is also a Coptic fragment, Papyrus Utrecht 1, which contains an episode corresponding to Gregory's Epitome ch. 18, most likely in a more original form. Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew. Introduction," 104.

[9] Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew. Introduction," 104.

focused on the miracles. It is further disputed whether the *Acts of Andrew* originally included a narrative called the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of Cannibals*. As the beginning of the narrative is missing, it is possible that the joint story of Andrew and Matthias was originally located here. This is also how Gregory organizes the events in his epitome. Dennis MacDonald argues for this hypothesis,[10] but most scholars consider it unlikely.[11] Stylistically the work changes character from the travel section (among the Cannibals) to the later parts (the Passion), set in the city of Patras. Even MacDonald concedes that the sections must have been written by two different authors, though he maintains that it is one work.[12] I follow the scholarly majority and consider the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of Cannibals* a later composition. MacDonald has also suggested that the *Acts of Andrew*, including the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, is an attempt to Christianize Homer.[13] As will be further argued below, the Platonic influence seems stronger than the Homeric in my view.

The last portion of the *Acts of Andrew* has been reconstructed from a handful of Greek manuscripts and an Armenian Martyrdom.[14] Sometimes referred to as the Greek *Acts of Andrew* or the *Passion of Andrew*, this section narrates the events of Andrew's second visit to Patras in Achaia, leading up to and culminating in his martyrdom.[15] In this study, it is the Greek *Acts of Andrew* which will be considered.[16] The modern reconstructions by MacDonald and Prieur have been criticized by Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta. He argues that the manuscripts resist such a compilation and should rather be studied individually "due to their different provenance, time of

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[10] MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, 22–47.

[11] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 32–35. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, 240; A. Hilhorst and P.J. Lalleman, "The *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*: Is it Part of the Original *Acts of Andrew*?," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 13.

[12] MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, 47–51.

[13] See Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[14] Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew. Introduction," 104–105.

[15] The martyrdom proper was also circulated independently of other narratives about the apostle Andrew. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, 232.

[16] MacDonald's edition also gives an English translation of the text. See MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*. See also Prieur's edition, which has a French translation. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*.

composition, intention and character."[17] The "primitive text" and the intentions of the author are not of particular interest for this study, as my major concern is to study the text in relation to Greco-Roman childbearing discourse. The scholarly reconstructions of the Greek text, even if composite, adequately reflect salvation and childbearing discourses of the second and third centuries.

The provenance of the original work is unknown. Different places of origin have been proposed, with Alexandria in Egypt as the top contender.[18] John Elliott and Hans-Josef Klauck date the *Acts* to the early third century,[19] while MacDonald and Prieur suggest the second half of the second century.[20] I agree with Prieur's arguments for an early dating: the *Acts* contains surprisingly few references to Scripture; shows an almost complete lack of ecclesiastical rites; and has a distinctive Christology.[21] Such a dating of the *Acts of Andrew* would place it between the Pastoral Epistles (early second century) and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* (early third century).

In assessing the genre of the *Acts of Andrew*, I think it is important to recognize novelistic, biographical as well as philosophical aspects. The *Acts of Andrew* is considered the most philosophical of the *Apocryphal Acts*. David Pao argues that its genre is "biography of philosopher" rather than Hellenistic novel.[22] It has further been argued that it was written as

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[17] Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, *Acta Andreae Apocrypha. A New Perspective on the Nature, Intention and Significance of the Primitive Text*, Cahiers d'Orientalisme (Genève: Cramer, 2007), xiv.

[18] Prieur suggests Achaia or Egypt, and seems to be leaning towards the latter. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 416. Elliot suggests Syria and Egypt as possible locations. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, 235. Bremmer proposes Bithynia as the place of composition for the *Acts of Andrew* as well as *Acts of Peter*, Bremmer, "The Apocryphal Acts: Author, Place, Time and Readership," 159. Finally, MacDonald also points to Alexandria as "the most likely place of composition." MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, 59.

[19] Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, 236; Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 116.

[20] MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, 59; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 413–414.

[21] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 413–414. Prieur bases his argument on Junod and Kaestli's similar dating of the *Acts of John*, see Eric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983).

[22] See David W. Pao, "The Genre of the *Acts of Andrew*," *Apocrypha* 6 (1995). See also Laura S. Nasrallah, "'She Became What the Words Signified': The Greek *Acts of Andrew's* Construction of the Reader-Disciple," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, ed. François Bovon, Ann Graham Brock, and Christopher R. Matthews (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 1999), 237–239.

one piece of work, rather than building on oral stories or textual units in circulation.[23] As I have said, the beginning is not preserved, but the *Acts* ends with a postscript where the writer reveals his concerns: "Hereabouts I should make an end of the blessed tales, acts and mysteries difficult—or should I say impossible—to express. Let this stroke of the pen end it" (65). I agree with Pao that the *Acts of Andrew* differs from the other Acts in showing traits from the "biography of philosopher" genre. As I will discuss more closely below, Andrew is depicted as a Socrates, and influence from Middle Platonic philosophy seems strong.[24] At the same time, traits from the genre of Hellenistic novels can be found in use of certain *topoi*, such as travel, love and chastity, as will be clear in the discussion below.

Summary of the Story

The Greek manuscripts begin when the apostle Andrew has recently arrived for a second visit in the town of Patras in Achaia, the provincial seat of the proconsul Aegeates. The apostle's preaching and healing activities have drawn the interest of Maximilla, the proconsul's wife. Her husband is out of town, but his brother, the philosopher Stratocles, is visiting. When Stratocles' beloved slave Alcman is stricken by a demon, Maximilla and her faithful slave Iphidama comfort Stratocles and summon the apostle Andrew. In public, Andrew prays for the slave, who is healed. Stratocles is persuaded by Andrew's healing powers and superior philosophy. In a speech, Andrew describes Stratocles' conversion as a giving birth of the inner person.

Andrew preaches an ascetic gospel to Maximilla and persuades her to stop having sexual relations with her husband. When Aegeates the proconsul arrives home from his travels, she rebukes him for kissing her while she is at prayer. But rather than confronting her husband with her resolution towards sexual renunciation, she dresses up another slave, Euclia, and pays her to have sex with Aegeates in her stead. After eight months, Maximilla's scheme is found out. Euclia has boasted to her fellow slaves about her relationship to her master, and they tell on her to Aegeates. The proconsul is infuriated, and has Euclia tortured and thrown outside, where she is eaten

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[23] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 57. According to Prieur, this is different from the other Apocryphal Acts. See Brock's assessment of the complex oral/ textual history of *Acts of Paul*, and Thomas for a similar evaluation of the *Acts of Peter*. Ann Graham Brock, "Genre of the *Acts of Paul*. One Tradition Enhancing Another," *Apocrypha* 5 (1994); Thomas, *The Acts of Peter, Gospel literature, and the Ancient Novel. Rewriting the Past*.

[24] Richard I. Pervo, "Early Christian Fiction," in *Greek Fiction. The Greek Novel in Context*, ed. J.R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman (London: Routledge, 1994), 244–246.

by dogs. Aegeates suspects that Maximilla is unfaithful, but he has not yet learnt the full story and does not know about Andrew and his teachings. When he confronts Maximilla with his suspicions, she vaguely admits that she is in love.

One day when Aegeates is walking around the city with his slaves, one of them spots Andrew. He points the apostle out to his master as the source of Maximilla's "passion." The proconsul immediately arrests Andrew and has him thrown in prison. At home, he gives Maximilla an ultimatum: resume marital relations or Andrew will die. Together with Iphidama, Maximilla visits Andrew in prison. In a long speech he urges her to stand firm and avoid sex with Aegeates, even if this results in Andrew's death. Maximilla tells Aegeates about her decision to stay chaste, and Andrew is condemned to crucifixion. He is not nailed to the cross, but tied with ropes, because Aegeates assumes this will prolong his suffering. This strategy fails, since it gives Andrew three nights and days to preach to the crowd who have gathered. Finally the people are persuaded by his words and a delegation of two thousand approaches Aegeates to have Andrew released. They accuse Aegeates of false judgment, and the proconsul, fearing an uprising, consents to release Andrew. When Aegeates arrives at the execution place he is surprised to be rebuked by Andrew, who actually prefers to die. After a short prayer, Andrew passes away, and at night Maximilla and Stratocles bury him.

This concluding scene is followed by a short résumé, where we learn that Maximilla separated from Aegeates for good; that Aegeates committed suicide some time later; and that Stratocles refused to receive the inheritance from his brother. Finally, there is the above-quoted postscript, where the narrator appears in the first person, praying that the words of the story may have been transmitted correctly and may bless the listener.

Salvation in the Acts of Andrew

Salvation is an important, perhaps even the most central, issue in the *Acts of Andrew*.[25] But the *Acts* is a narrative, not a theological treatise. Moreover, it is important to remember that a large portion of this narrative is lost. Thus, it may not be possible to discern a full-fledged soteriology. I will here briefly sketch some of the aspects of salvation that have been found in the text. Perhaps most noteworthy is Jesus' role in salvation, which is strangely

[25] Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 133; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 287.

absent from the *Acts*. Although he is petitioned through prayer and called "Lord" as well as "Christ,"[26] there are no references to the earthly life of Jesus or to his resurrection. The place left vacant by Christ seems to be filled by the apostle.[27] In the middle of his "birth pangs" Stratocles praises the apostle and formulates his unique position: "Most prophetic man, truly a messenger of the living God, I too will not separate from you until I recognize myself" (8). The miracles and preaching of the apostle reveal the truth about a person's relationship to God. The message of the apostle, rather than the works of Christ, conveys salvation. Thus, the place of the apostle becomes extremely important, since he is the primary mediator between humans and the divine. As François Bovon puts it, "the apostle alone offers a soteriological bridge."[28]

I will focus on three aspects of the *Acts*' concept of salvation that I find particularly interesting for the purpose of this investigation. First, there is a repeated stress on the significance of "saving words"—that salvation is somehow gained through words. Second, there are some interesting Platonic traits in the salvation discourse in the *Acts*, including the immortality of the soul and the idea that the truth should be remembered. Finally, I want to question the schoarly consensus that the theology in the *Acts* is Encratite, and connects salvation with abstinence and a strict diet. All these aspects of the salvation discourse, I argue, have gender and class implications and thus cannot be resolved without a thorough analysis of the text's constructions of gender and class.

The Significance of Words

In the scholarly discussion of the way in which the apostle takes over Christ's role, some have pointed to the importance of *words* in the *Acts*. Bovon calls the soteriology of the *Acts of Andrew* a "soteriology by words."[29] There are several references in the text to the salvific content of words, e.g. in the

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[26] It has also been noted that there is no distinction between God the Father and Christ. Klauck calls it Christomonism, as Christ is once called Father, but never Son of God, see Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 135. Prieur also notes that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. There is, however, a Trinitarian doxology at the end of the postscript, which Prieur regards as secondary. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 548.

[27] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 365–367.

[28] François Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, *Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 91. See also Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 135.

[29] Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," 82, 92.

expression "the free gift of saving words" (ἐπίδοσιν τῶν σωτηρίων λόγων, 9).[30] It seems that it is Andrew's words that confer eternal life. The special relationship between the apostle and God gives the words a divine effectiveness. Both Stratocles and Maximilla are tremendously affected, even transformed, by the words of Andrew. It should be noted, however, that they are not transformed in the same way. Stratocles' conversion, described as a birth, results in the appearance of "saving words", i.e., he brings forth words of his own. After his "childbearing," Stratocles is encouraged to speak, to ask Andrew questions in the presence of the other believers that may benefit all (9). He is also called a friend of the hearing of salvation (φίλος σωτηρίας ἀκροάσεως, 8). Maximilla, on the other hand, "becomes words." After hearing Andrew's exhortation to flee from Aegeates' marriage bed, she "became what the words themselves had signified" (γενομένη τοῦτο ὅπερ οἱ λόγοι ἐδείκνυον, 46). Maximilla is not encouraged to speak, but to act on account of Andrew's preaching. The significance of these different designations will be discussed further below, when I look at constructions of gender and class in the text.

The saving words (9, 44) are not only those spoken by Andrew to his hearers; they are also of central concern to the narrator in the transmission of the story to the hearing/reading audience. The postscript is important, according to Bovon, because here the author introduces himself in the first person and makes clear that the work is a revelation.[31] The *Acts of Andrew* is unique among the Apocryphal Acts in containing a postscript. Its content and length varies among the different manuscripts.[32] This is MacDonald's reconstruction:

> Hereabouts I should make an end of the blessed tales, acts, and mysteries difficult—or should I say impossible—to express. Let this stroke of the pen end it. I will pray first for myself, that I heard what was actually said, both the obvious and also the obscure, comprehensible only to the intellect. Then I will pray for all who are convinced by what was said, that they may have fellowship with each other, as God opens the ears of the listeners, in order to make comprehensible all his gifts in Christ our Lord, to whom, together with the Father, be glory, honor, and power with the all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and always, forever and ever, amen. (*Acts Andr.* 65)

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[30] Επίδοσις: "free gift, 'benevolence,', benefaction," LSJ.

[31] Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," 88, 92. For the significance of the postscript, see also Nasrallah, "'She Became What the Words Signified': The Greek *Acts of Andrew's* Construction of the Reader-Disciple." and Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 133.

[32] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 56–57.

Laura Nasrallah has also points to the significance of words for gaining salvation in the *Acts of Andrew*. Particularly in the postscript, she finds a concern about the right transmission and the ability of the hearers of the narrative to understand correctly, and thus grasp its salvific content.[33] The implications of gender and class for the *Acts*' "soteriology by words" need to be further scrutinized. Can both male and female, slave and free attain and transmit these saving words in the same way? Or are there differences?

Platonic Influence

Ideas from Platonism quite clearly color the salvation discourse of the *Acts*.[34] Echoes of Socrates' speeches in *Phaedo* may be heard when Andrew explains that salvation is the soul's union with God after death:

> Men, who are present with me, women, children, old, slaves, free, and any others who would hear: if you suppose this act of dying is the end of ephemeral life, leave this place at once. If you understand the conjunction of the soul with a body to be the soul itself, so that after separation (of the two) nothing at all exists, you possess the intelligence of animals and one would have to list you among ferocious beasts. (*Acts Andr.* 56)

There is no bodily resurrection, only immortality of the soul in the *Acts*. In this speech, which Andrew gives from the cross, the soul's division from the body and subsequent ascent to God forms the main theme. Similarly, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates teaches that death is nothing but a release and separation of body and soul (67d). At the brink of death, Socrates instructs his listeners in the right philosophical attitude towards death and explains what it consists of. So does Andrew. To believe or not to believe in the afterlife of the soul is the main dividing line that separates humankind, he explains. On one side there are those animal-like creatures who think bodily existence is everything. On the other there is the more elevated, philosopher-like group who believe in the coexistence of body and soul in this life, and the soul's separation from the body, and continued existence in the next. It is primarily the believing group around Andrew that holds this insight, but it is presented as a rational idea that can be grasped by anyone.

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[33] Nasrallah, "'She Became What the Words Signified': The Greek *Acts of Andrew's* Construction of the Reader-Disciple," 240–242.

[34] Pao, "The Genre of the *Acts of Andrew*," 189; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 376–377; MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 5.

There is, thus, no ontological difference between two groups of people—predestined or not—for salvation, but a choice on offer in the message of the apostle.[35]

Another Platonic aspect of the salvation discourse is the idea that the truth should be remembered or recognized. Andrew's method is the same as Socrates': he reminds the hearers of what they already know, using the Socratic method of interrogation.[36] To hold the right knowledge about the nature of the world, the soul and the afterlife, thus constitutes a major element of salvation. This is called faith (πίστις, 10) as well as knowledge or recognition. The noun γνῶσις is not used, but the verb γνωρίζω recurs throughout the narrative. For example, in Andrew's praise of the "nature being saved," he says:

> O human being, if you understand these things in yourself—that you are immaterial, holy, light, akin to the unbegotten [συγγενὴς τοῦ ἀγεννήτου], intellectual, heavenly, transparent, pure, beyond the flesh, beyond the world … then desire to see him who was revealed to you without coming into being, whom you alone soon will recognize [γνωρίζῃ], if you take courage.
>
> (*Acts Andr.* 38)

On another occasion, Andrew says that "we" who belong to the savior (τοῦ σῴζοντος) "have recognized the destroyer [τὸν ἀπολλύντα ἐγνωρίσαμεν]" (33). Stratocles swears that he will seek to know himself (ἐμαυτὸν γνωρίζω, 8); Maximilla is urged to know her true nature (ἵνα γνωρίσῃς τὴν ἀληθῆ σου φύσιν, 40), whereas Aegeates is cursed because he has failed to believe the truth about himself (μὴ ἐπίστασαι αὐτὸς περὶ σεαυτοῦ, 62).

The realization of the truth is seen as an escape from the turbulence of the world. The believer achieves rest (ἀνάπαυσις), both in this life and in the next.[37] Thus, Maximilla rests with the "brothers" (ἀδελφοί) in her bedroom (19), and Andrew looks forward to the rest he will receive when he dies (63). Caroline Schroeder finds the following "Platonic objectives" in the Acts: "an understanding of the inner self, a unification with the divine, and a lasting sense of peace and rest."[38] The Platonic thrust of the *Acts*' salvation

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[35] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 295–296. See also Buell, *Why This New Race. Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, 143. Bovon, on the other hand, detects a paradox. The two types of hearers of Andrew's message, represented by Stratocles and Aegeates, seem "both to determine their lives freely and to be predestined to their fate, according to their relation or lack of relation to the words of life." Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," 91.

[36] Pao, "The Genre of the *Acts of Andrew*," 188.

[37] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 338–340.

[38] Caroline T. Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal

discourse lends itself to considerations about possible gendered implications of salvation. The process of recognition is described as a birthing process as well as one of becoming male. How do these images map on to the male and female characters of the narrative? How do these two images relate to each other? These are questions which will be dealt with later in this chapter.

The distinction between believer and non-believer is described with metaphors of family and kin as well as race (γένος). Concerning kinship language, the term συγγενής is recurrent throughout the *Acts* and is the key term to describe relationships within the group of believers.[39] Non-believers, on the other hand, are kindred to the snake (ὄφεως συγγενής, 42)—a reference to Gen 3—and belong to the bodily realm (39). Further, the believers are not only kindred to each other and to God; they are also kindred to the *words* that Andrew preaches.[40] Conversely, whoever is opposed to Andrew's message is an enemy of the word (μισολόγος, 42).[41] Believers are also called brothers (ἀδελφοί, e.g. 3; 10; 19). MacDonald translates ἀδελφοί with "brethren" whenever "the author's intentions seem to have been gender-neutral" because the term "seems less starkly gendered than 'brothers.'"[42] However, the usage of this term in the *Acts* is in my opinion not as gender-neutral as MacDonald claims, since it makes the female members of the believing group invisible in the text.

Ethnoracial language is not as prevalent as kinship language, but is used at certain points. For example, the blessed race (μακάριον ἡμῶν τὸ γένος, 33) are those who belong to the one who saves (τοῦ σῴζοντος, 33). This group is also called "the race being saved" (τὸ σῳζόμενον γένος, 50). Denise Kimber Buell argues that kinship and ethnoracial language is used by the character of Andrew to refer to those who share his views or to those he is trying to persuade. Membership in this kinship group is attained by "remembering

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Acts of Andrew, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Aopcrypha*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 50.

[39] Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles."

[40] Nasrallah notes three instances where words are called συγγενής: "τῶν αὐτοῦ συγγενῶν λόγων" (10); "τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου λόγους" (43); "πάντα τὸν συγγενῆ τῶν λόγων ἄνθρωπον" (47). Nasrallah, "'She Became What the Words Signified': The Greek *Acts of Andrew's* Construction of the Reader-Disciple," 241.

[41] Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," 91.

[42] MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, x.

one's true nature … upon hearing Andrew's words and by responding by adopting an ascetic ethos."[43]

As part of the recognition process and as a marker of their new identity as the family of God, the believers go through the ritual of the Lord's seal. When Maximilla, Iphidama, Stratocles and Alcman have accepted the faith, they are "deemed worthy of the Lord's seal" (τῆς ἐν κυρίω σφραγῖδος, 10). This may be a reference to baptism, but it should be noted that the ritual is not called baptism in the text.[44] The significance of the seal seems to lie in the impression it makes on the soul, whereby God can recognize those who belong to him. Andrew explains to his "children": "if you keep this seal's impression unconfused with other seals that imprint other designs, God will commend you and receive you to his domain" (11). The seal seems to have soteriological significance: it gives acess to God's domain. Prieur calls the seal "a protective amulet for their ascent after death."[45] The seal serves as a marker of the family relationship the believers have to God. Even the seal itself is described in kinship terminology, as "kindred to light" (11). But the seal is also a gift that can be polluted: "So, my children, let us guard the deposit entrusted to us. Let us return the deposit spotless to the one who entrusted it to us. When we arrive there let us say to him, 'look, we brought you your gift unabused'" (11). Only if the seal is returned to God unsullied, will he accept the soul. If it is not kept pure, one risks eternal condemnation.[46] The seal thus shows that recognition must go both ways. Salvation is not attained only by a believer recognizing his or her true nature, but also by God recognizing the believer with an unsullied seal. How is the seal sullied? Through sexual relations, according to most commentators.

An Encratite Gospel?

In the *Acts of Andrew*, the Judaeo-Christian story of the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen 2–3) forms the cosmic frame for humankind's alienation from God.

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[43] Buell, *Why This New Race. Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, 142.

[44] Klauck says it is "possible but not certain" that it denotes baptism, see Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 135. Prieur also regards baptism as one of several possible interpretations. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 190–192. The seal as a Christian ritual also occurs in other Apocryphal Acts. For example in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where it probably denotes baptism: "And Thecla said, 'Only give me the seal in Christ [τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγῖδα] and no temptation shall touch me.' And Paul said, 'Thecla, be patient; you shall receive the water' (25)." For a further discussion of the seal in early Christian terminology, see Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology. Its origins and Early Development*, 289–386.

[45] Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew. Introduction," 112.

[46] MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 221.

The fall has caused the need for salvation, and the believer can somehow correct the fall through his or her own actions. "For it is ordained that each person correct his or her own fall," (37) preaches Andrew. The question is then, how can a person do that? Is it through an Encratite lifestyle? Most scholars understand the *Acts of Andrew* as promoting a strict asceticism, including sexual abstinence, for all believers. Klauck argues that redemption in the *Acts* means the return of the person to the state before the fall, and the redeemed "must practice sexual continence, the renunciation of material goods, a very simple way of life, and frugal nourishment."[47] Prieur, too, is quite clear that he regards the *Acts* as Encratite in its theology. He finds that sexuality is radically rejected and that the author expects conversion to be followed by complete continence as an essential condition for salvation.[48]

However, these assertions have very weak foundations in the text. In the *Acts of Andrew*, the apostle does *not* explicitly preach chastity to all listeners. Sexual renunciation is thematized primarily through the relationship between Maximilla and her husband. Nowhere is Stratocles or any other convert urged to refrain from sexual relations. There is an Armenian version of the *Acts* that contains two passages that may point towards an Encratite theology. In a speech by Andrew to the crowd, he preaches on the futility of marriage:

> And if the pleasure and intercourse of marriage pleases you, and if the corruption that is from them, full of pain, makes you sad, and if you are in need of sustenance for your many children, and if the annoying poverty they cause is known to you, it will upset you. (*Acts Andr.* 56)

> What pride issues from external ancestry if the soul in you is held captive, sold to desires? And why do we desire pleasure and childbearing, for later we have to separate? No one knows what he does. Who will take care of his wife when he is preoccupied merely by the passions of desire?[49] (*Acts Andr.* 57)

These passages focus on the painfulness of earthly life and ponder the futility of childbearing and marriage. There is a radical devaluation of the present life, in favor of the next, but there is no soteriological function attached to the ascetic life. Both MacDonald and Prieur consider these quotations to have belonged to the original Greek text of the *Acts*.[50] Even

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[47] Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 135.

[48] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 323.

[49] Translation from Armenian by Thomas J. Samuelian. See MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, xi.

[50] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 522; MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*, 322.

if they did, it is in my opinion doubtful that they expect all converts to embrace sexual renunciation.[51] Andrew only preaches chastity explicitly to Maximilla, and she is the only one who clearly renounces sexual relations through the course of the narrative. One must therefore ask whether this upper-class woman represents all believers, whether male or female, slave or free?

The general call to chastity seems clearer in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where Paul preaches "the word of God about abstinence (ἐγκρατεία) and resurrection" to the crowd (5).[52] Although Thecla is the main convert to this chaste lifestyle, there are also other young men and women who convert to a life in celibacy.[53] In the *Acts of Andrew*, this is different. Aegeates captures and kills Andrew as a personal revenge for the disruption the apostle has caused to his household, while in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Paul is shown disrupting the whole city with his preaching to young women, and this is the cause of the public charges against both Paul and Thecla (20–21). I do not claim that the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is consistently Encratite.[54] I only suggest that one should be very cautious about assuming an Encratite paradigm based on the assumption that all the Apocryphal Acts contain common Encratite traits.[55] Rather, each text should be studied individually. Investigating the intersection of childbearing and salvation discourses in the *Acts of Andrew* might reveal a more nuanced way of understanding the purported Encratism of the text.[56] This is the task I now move on to.

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[51] I have considered only the English translations.

[52] See e.g the macarisms in 5–6 that highlight sexual renunciation in different forms, and the reports about Paul's teaching: "one must fear only one God and live in chastity" (9); "there is for you no resurrection unless you remain chaste and do not pollute the flesh" (12). For the Greek text, see *Acta Pauli et Theclae* in Constantin von Tischendorf, Max Bonnet, and Richard Adelbert Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959).

[53] See e.g. *Acts Paul* 7: "she saw many women and virgins going in to Paul"; and the group Thecla gathers for her travels at the end of the tale: "she came with a band of young men and maidens to Myra" (*Acts Paul* 40).

[54] It could be argued that this text, too, has some fissures. For example, Onesiphorus, Paul's closest ally in Iconium, has a wife and children (see e.g. 2; 7; 15, 23). See Konstan, who argues that all the Acts are "open texts" with an ambiguous perspective. They both affirm traditional household structures and bonds of love *and* advocate a radical message of celibacy and sexual renunciation. David Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1998).

[55] "Many Encratite ideas are embodied in the Apocryphal Acts." Hendrik F. Stander, "Encratites," Ferguson, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 371.

[56] Elsewhere I argue that the label "esoteric" is better suited than Entratite to characterize the soteriology of the *Acts of Andrew*. See Anna Rebecca Solevåg, "Adam, Eve and the Serpent

Constructions of Gender and Class

My presentation of salvation in the *Acts of Andrew* revealed a need to look at the text's construction of gender and class. Which underlying gender discourses do we find reflected in the text? How is ideal masculinity presented? What is the ideal woman like? What is proper behavior for slaves, and how is deviation from that norm regarded?

The Manly Apostle

The heroes in the *Acts* are portrayed as exemplary men. Andrew and Stratocles exemplify ideal manhood, while Aegeates, Maximilla's husband, is the villain from beginning to end. As we enter the story (the beginning is lost), Andrew is a recent arrival in the city. Although the the hearer/reader is in the know, there is confusion in Achaia concerning who Andrew is. He is described as a stranger (ξένος, 25; 51) who is first noticed by the crowd when he performs a healing miracle.[57] Maximilla, who has already been converted, describes the apostle to Stratocles, as he is fretting over his sick slave: "Don't worry about your servant, brother. Soon he will be healed [σωθήσεται], for there is a most God-fearing man sojourning in this city who not only can dispel demons [δαίμονας φυγαδεῦσαι], but if some menacing and serious sickness [πάθος] overcomes someone, he cures [ἰάσεται] it" (2).

Andrew seems here to be likened to an itinerant doctor. During the Roman Empire, wandering physicians were part of the hierarchy of Hellenistic medicine. According to Vivian Nutton the royal doctors were at the top and "at the other extreme were the travelling doctors, wandering the roads of Greece or Judaea, touting their wares and their skills."[58] These doctors

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in the *Acts of Andrew*," in *Hidden Truths from Eden. Esoteric Readings of Genesis 2–3*, ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Susanne Scholz, *Semeia Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

[57] There is only one healing episode in the preserved Greek part of the *Acts of Andrew*, the healing of Alcman (*Acts Andr*. 5). There is also a reference to Andrew having healed Maximilla at an earlier point in the narrative (*Acts Andr*. 26); and one of Aegeates' slaves claims to have seen Andrew raising people from the dead (*Acts Andr*. 25). Gregory's Epitome and a Coptic fragment (Papyrus Coptic Utrecht 1) show that in the lost parts of the *Acts of Andrew*, Andrew was engaged in healing as well as exorcism, see MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals*. Bremmer, who looks at all these texts, regards Andrew's role as that of an exorcist, and does not relate it to medical practice. Jan N. Bremmer, "Man, Magic and Martyrdom in the Acts of Andrew," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 24–32.

[58] Nutton, *Ancient Medicine*, 152.

probably had to compete with each other and anyone else who professed to have healing abilitities. Andrew is portrayed as a competitor in the public arena, albeit one who is more powerful than mere magicians. This is how he describes his own competition after he successfully heals Stratocles' slave:

> This is what is most distressing to those who are turning to a faith in God from a great tempest and wandering: to see these ailments cured [πάθη θεραπευόμενα] which many considered beyond help … Magicians [μάγοι] are standing here helpless to do anything, both those who had given up on the lad and others whom we all see huckstering in public. Why have they been unable to expel this fearsome demon from the pitiful lad? Because they are kindred [συγγενής] to it. (*Acts Andr.* 5)

In this passage, Andrew is contrasted to mere magicians (μάγοι, 4; 5), who apparently have given up in their attempts to heal the slave. They are helpless, since God does not listen to magicians and "quacks" (περίεργοι, 5). Andrew, on the other hand, is portrayed as a doctor with real healing powers. Andrew is also connected to the medical profession in his role as midwife. Although his midwifery is metaphorical, the language in these passages (6–7; 9) draws on the discourse of medical practitioners, as will be elaborated later in this chapter. In contrast to magicians and soothsayers, Andrew has contact with the true God, as he explains to Maximilla and the crowd. The term περιέργος can mean "meddlesome, inquisitive, curious", but also refers to "curious arts, magic."[59] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow has shown how this term is often linked to women in Greco-Roman texts, and how an accusation of being a περιέργος could be an attack on someone's masculinity.[60] Andrew seems here to claim that while he is a genuine healer, his competitors are dealing in effeminate magic and superstition.

Andrew is not only a healer. After all, he performs only one healing in the preserved part of the *Acts*.[61] As many have noted, he is first and foremost portrayed as a philosopher and teacher.[62] The roles of healer and philoso-

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[59] LSJ. Note that this is the term for the "busybody" young widows in 1 Tim 5:13. For the use of the term in the Pastorals, see Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, 149–151.

[60] Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, 115, 89–91.

[61] Prieur sees a pattern throughout Gregory's Epitome and the Greek *Acts*: Whenever Andrew arrives in a new town, he first performs one or several miracles, then he speaks and provokes conversions. Jean-Marc Prieur, "La figure de l'apôtre dans les Actes apocryphes d'André," in *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres. Christianisme et monde païen*, ed. François Bovon et al. (Genève: Editions Labor et Fides, 1981), 126.

[62] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 184–185; Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," 94–95; Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*,

pher merge in the character of Andrew: in his deeds he is a doctor with healing powers, and in his rhetorical skills he is a philosopher, who speaks divine words of truth. He is described as a new Socrates—and, thus, the quintessential philosopher—who deals in Socratic midwifery and willingly dies when his time has come.[63] As noted, his philosophical method, reminding his disciples of what they already know, correlates with the Socratic method, and the content of his teaching is to some degree Platonic. Finally, in the martyrdom narrative, numerous traits in the text resemble Plato's description of Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*.[64]

In contrast to the ideal man in the Pastoral Epistles, Andrew is not depicted as having a family. He is *not* a householder.[65] As noted, he is a stranger (ξένος). From the silences in the text concerning Andrew's household relations, we may assume that there is no interest in portraying him as a householder (οἰκοδεσπότης) who is married, owns a house and has slaves or any other possessions. On the contrary, he is accused of being a corrupter of households (26; 51), since he has turned Maximilla away from her husband. It should be noted, however, that it is never stated explicitly that he is single, celibate or free from earthly belongings.

Metaphorically, Andrew is still a father figure. Just like the fictive "Paul" in the Pastoral Epistles, Andrew addresses his convertees, Maximilla and Stratocles as "children," (e.g.: τέκνον μου, 4; τεκνία μου, 11; τὴν χρηστήν μου παῖδα Μαξιμίλλαν, 15; τέκνον μου Στρατοκλή, 53). Andrew is a father and a brother only through his role as intermediary for God/Christ.[66] The metaphorical family of believers stands in contrast to earthly families. To join the "brothers" (ἀδελφοί) sometimes involves turning away from one's family. It is a point in the narrative that although Stratocles is Aegeates' brother in the flesh, they are not kindred in the metaphorical sense. Ultimately it is God/Christ who will be a father to all who long for one, as Andrew asserts on

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the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 52–55; Pao, "The Genre of the *Acts of Andrew*," 190–191.

[63] MacDonald calls Andrew "a baptized Socrates": "initiate in divination and maieutics (interrogative midwifery); expert in helping his listeners remember the true nature of the soul. At the end of the *Acts* the apostle is eager for death and lectures his closest friends concerning the soul." MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 5.

[64] Pao, "The Genre of the *Acts of Andrew*," 190–191; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 306–307; MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 268–269.

[65] Compare the discussion of protocols of masculinity in the Pastorals in Chapter Three.

[66] There is no clear distinction between the divine persons in the *Acts of Andrew*. Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 135.

behalf of the deity: "If you desire a father for those who are rejected on earth, I am your father. If you desire a legitimate brother [ἀδελφὸν γνήσιον] to set you apart from bastard brothers [μὴ γνησίων ἀδελφῶν], I am your brother" (12). The believers are thus constructed as legitimate offspring, while non-believers are "bastards," children born of illegitimate unions.

As I noted above, Andrew's stranger status leads to some confusion in other characters' perceptions of him. Not all regard Andrew as a virtuous philosopher; they mistake him for a lower-class person and treat him accordingly. According to Aegeates, he looks like a poor day-laborer (ἵνα πένης οὕτως καὶ λιτὸς ὁρώμενος, 26) and Stratocles' slaves mistake him for a "shabby tramp" (εὐτελῆ καὶ λιτὸν ἄνδρα, 3). The *topos* of mistaking an elite traveler for a tramp or slave is well known in Greco-Roman literature from Homer to the Greek novels.[67] His enemies describe Andrew not only as lower class, but also as a man whose sexuality, and thus masculinity, is deviant. He is accused of being a seducer of wives (25; 51) and a disrupter of households (26; 51). Aegeates' slave describes Maximilla's infatuation with the stranger to his master with these words:

> She has so given way to desire [πόθῳ] for him that she loves [στέργειν] no one more than him, including you, I would say. Not only has she become intimately involved with the man, she has tied up your brother Stratocles with the same passion for him that has tied her up. (*Acts Andr.* 25)

The slave is insinuating that Andrew has seduced both Maximilla and Stratocles. Jennifer Knust argues that in Greco-Roman literature, sexual slander was used by the elite to define themselves as virtuous, but non-elites as deficient in virtue.[68] This trope is employed by Andrew's enemies. The reader/hearer knows that, despite the accusations, Andrew is a respectable man—neither lower-class nor sexually deviant—whereas the accuser, Aegeates, is the moral culprit. When Aegeates captures Andrew, he ridicules his prisoner, and asks him about his sexual power: "Teach me too about your renown and what sort of power you have, such that you have many lovers [ἐραστάς], so I hear, who are rich and poor, including infants, even though

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[67] See e.g. The *Odyssey*, book 18, where Odysseus is mistaken for a vagrant beggar and repeatedly called "stranger" (ξεῖνος, 18.38; 61; 112; 123; 327; 357). In the Greek novels, the upper-class heroines are sold into slavery and/or prostitution, but their extraordinary beauty soon reveals that they are upper-class women. See e.g. *An Ethiopian Tale* 5.8–10; *Callirhoe* 2.1–2; *Leucippe and Clitophon* 5.17.

[68] Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust. Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 47. See also Ivarsson, "A Man has to Do What a Man has to Do: Protocols of Masculine Sexual Behavior in 1 Corinthians 6–7," 187.

you appear in this manner like a simple old tramp" (26). In accusing Andrew of having lovers (ἐρασταί), Aegeates is insinuating that Andrew is playing the passive role in the sexual act, i.e. that he is being penetrated. According to Craig Williams, it was of the utmost importance for a Roman man to come across as penetrator rather than penetrated. He calls this "the prime directive of masculine sexual behavior" since it had "an obvious relationship to broader structures of hierarchical male power."[69] Aegeates thus accuses Andrew of breaking the kyriarchally structured code for sexual relations, where the upper-class man is always "on top" in relation to free women, children or slaves. The accusations do not really make sense—which only proves the point to the Christian reader: Andrew is not guilty of the charges.

Andrew is not only orally abused, but also physically beaten (51) by Aegeates. Corporal punishment was reserved for slaves and lower-class persons in the Roman Empire.[70] To be able to defend the integrity of his own body was crucial to the upper-class Roman male. Suffering physical abuse was conceptually similar to being penetrated or suffering other kinds of sexual submissiveness.[71] Apart from Andrew, only slaves are corporeally abused in the narrative. The story thus plays on the *topos* of misunderstanding the stranger's place in the hierarchy, both through accusations of deviant sexuality and through corporal abuse.

Although Andrew's corporal integrity is violated, he, not Aegeates, emerges as the truly virtuous man in their final showdown. When Aegeates attempts to take him down from the cross and free him, Andrew prays that he may not be humiliated any more, but may be united with God: "May that runt no longer humiliate the one who has known your greatness (τὸν ἐγνωκότα σου τὸ μέγεθος ὁ μικρὸς μηκέτι ταπεινούτω, 63)." In this scene, Andrew has complete control over his passions and does not betray any fear, thus proving himself to be the better man. Probably imitating Socrates, he laughs in the face of death (55).[72]

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[69] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, 18. For the invective category of the *pathicus/cinaedus* in Roman literature, see Holt N. Parker, "The Teratogenic Grid," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[70] Horsley, "The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars," 41–43.

[71] See Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body. Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman thought," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). See also Ivarsson, "A Man has to Do What a Man has to Do: Protocols of Masculine Sexual Behavior in 1 Corinthians 6–7," 186.

[72] MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 262–263.

Stratocles, too, seems to be cast in the role of philosopher. Even before his conversion he was a good man, "comporting himself gently to everyone and greeting them all graciously and with decorum" (1).[73] The first thing we learn about Stratocles is that he "petitioned Caesar not to serve in the army but to pursue philosophy" (1). Thus he seems to be predisposed to grasp Andrew's elevated philosophy,[74] but as part of his conversion he rejects his previous philosophical ideas (7–8). After his conversion he declares his intentions, that "he would bid adieu to all his possessions, he decided to live alone, with no one else but the apostle" (2). In other words, he becomes an itinerant, like Andrew (7), and disposes of his wealth: "he forsook all his possessions and devoted himself to the word alone" (12). People are shocked at Stratocles' new behavior: he carries his oil flask to the gymnasium himself and goes to the market to buy his own vegetables. This is very unusual behavior for a man who is "the most honored man in Achaia" and owns many slaves (25). Stratocles emerges as a true philosopher's disciple, following Andrew everywhere, listening to his speeches and discoursing with him.

Stratocles is not quite passionless like his teacher. He is a neophyte and a disciple, still learning, but obviously heading in the right direction. He gets upset when his slave (and lover?) Alcman is sick (2). He also cries and groans in his "childbearing" conversion process (7–8). Later, he laments Andrew's imminent departure from this world (43–44) and is angry at Aegeates for his unjust treatment of the apostle (53). An episode that is particularly interesting from an intersectional perspective occurs when Stratocles beats up the soldiers who are taking Andrew to the execution place:

> Stratocles did not spare any of them, but gave each a beating, ripped their clothing from top to bottom, tore Andrew away, and told them, "Thank the blessed one for educating [παιδεύσαντι] me and teaching [διδάξαντι] me to check my violent temper. Otherwise, I would have demonstrated for you what Stratocles and Aegeates the rogue are capable of. For we (believers) have learned to endure our afflictions." (*Acts Andr.* 52)

Is Stratocles here portrayed as a not yet fully developed Christian, or an upper-class male who is entitled to beat up any slave he pleases? Is the reference to training and learning ironic, i.e. is he disproving by his actions what he claims to have learnt? Or is it thanks to his Christian training that he does not kill the slaves but "only" beats them up, as an appropriate punishment

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[73] Bremmer also notes the stress on moderation and mildness in the description of Stratocles. Bremmer, "Man, Magic and Martyrdom in the Acts of Andrew," 17–18.

[74] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 373.

for their actions? According to agricultural handbooks and other literature on slave management, corporal punishment of slaves was considered necessary, but should be carried out in a way that did not diminish the dignity of the owner, that is, justly, not in anger.[75] Aegeates attributes Stratocles' actions to "the nobility of his soul" (53), and Andrew does not seem to chastise him for his deeds. He urges him to continue to keep his "mind unwavering" and no longer listen to advice from others (53). He seems, then, to take Stratocles' actions as a sign that he is now fit to become a teacher himself, rather than as a slip in his progress.

Philosopher Masculinity

If we compare the descriptions of the men in the story to the so-called protocols of masculinity as outlined in Chapter One, it seems that the focus is on self-restraint rather than on dominance as the most important protocol. Stratocles and Andrew behave like men in control of themselves. They have no possessions to rule them and they are careful in their intake of food (25). Instead of sleeping or engaging in excessive sex at night, they are at prayer or in philosophical discussion (8; 13; 51). The nourishment of the soul is more important than the care of the body. "Although he has eaten nothing, he has glutted us with his words," (59) exclaims the crowd, after listening to Andrew's preaching from the cross for four days. A similar focus on courage and self-restraint can be found in both Stoic and Platonic traditions.[76] In the *Phaedo*, Socrates argues that precisely these two virtues are characteristic of philosophers:

> "Then, Simmias," he continued, "is not that which is called courage [ἀνδρεία] especially characteristic of philosophers?" "By all means," said he. "And self-restraint [σωφροσύνη]—that which is commonly called self-restraint, which consists in not being excited by the passions and being superior to them and acting in a seemly way—is not that characteristic to those alone who despise the body and pass their lives in philosophy?" (*Phaedo* 68c [Fowler, LCL])

One may call the masculinity in the *Acts of Andrew* a "philosopher masculinity" which focuses on personal composure and a detachment from passions, rather than on kyriarchal dominance.

In contrast to Stratocles and Andrew, Aegeates is completely lacking in self-restraint. He is a man of the body rather than the mind, giving in to his

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[75] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions*, 105–106.

[76] To achieve ἀπάθεια was an important Stoic ideal, and Andrew's control of his passions may reflect influence from Stoicism. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 378.

every urge in relation to food (46), drink (18), sleep (14) and sex (14; 18). He also has problems in controlling his emotions. When Maximilla's scheme is exposed, he furiously kills Euclia and crucifies the slaves who revealed the truth to him (23). He is "like a maniac," "seething with turbulence" (35) when he gives Maximilla his ultimatum. But he also gives in to other passions: excessive love for Maximilla (14), and extreme grief when he finds out that she does not love him (23).[77] Rather than being brave (or manly), Aegeates shows fear (δεδοικώς, 60). It is thus clear that the two virtues that Stratocles and Andrew hold in ample measure—bravery and self-control—are completely lacking in Aegeates.

In the *Acts of Andrew* there is, moreover, a connection between ideal manliness and one's eternal fate. The two ideal men are enlightened by the knowledge that after this life there is another one, where existence will be apart from the body (56). In the Platonic discourses there is also a connection between virtue and eternal life. Plato describes the characteristics as well as the eternal fate of two opposite categories of people. While the philosopher's soul is close to the divine and goes to the heavenly abode after death,[78] the lover of pleasures is like an animal, and his/her soul will be reborn in an animal.[79] Similarly, Aegeates is described as close to the animal world. He eats like an animal, he is called a savage lion (λέοντας ἠγρωμένου, 13); a snake (16); and he has a "beastly soul" (τὴν θηριώδη αὐτοῦ ψυχήν, 64). He is described as related to the sea, in constant turmoil and uproar (62).[80] He thus represents everything that is changeable and binds humans to this world.

However, Aegeates is more than just a bad proconsul and a brutish husband, bound by pleasures and emotions. Through Andrew's speeches we learn about the true nature of Aegeates: that he is the devil in disguise.[81] At one point he is called "that insolent and hostile snake" (τὸν Αἰγεάτην ὑβριστὴν καὶ ἀντίδικον ὄφιν, 16). In another passage, it is said that Aegeates is

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[77] Monika Pesthy, "Aegeates, the Devil in Person," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 47.

[78] "And no one who has not been a philosopher and who is not wholly pure when he departs, is allowed to enter into the communion of the gods, but only the lover of knowledge." *Phaedo*, 82b–c (Fowler, LCL).

[79] "Those who have indulged in gluttony and violence and drunkenness, and have taken no pains to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other beasts of that sort." *Phaedo* 81e (Fowler, LCL).

[80] János Bollók, "Poimandres and the Acta Andreae," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 108–109.

[81] Pesthy, "Aegeates, the Devil in Person," 48.

the son of the devil and the son of the snake (40). The image of the devil as snake draws on Gen 3, as will be elaborated below. The connection between Aegeates and the devil shows that he belongs to a different family and race than the believers. Through his lack of insight, the devil has a thorough hold on him.

Andrew's final speech, addressed from the cross, is to Aegeates. Here we get the longest exposition of Aegeates' connection with the devil and everything evil. Andrew recounts what God has revealed to him about the proconsul:

> He is your enemy. He is a corrupter, a cheat, a destroyer, a slanderer [κατάλαλος], a boor, a maniac, a busybody [περίεργος], a murderer, an insolent egotist, a flatterer, a magician [γόης], terrible, petulant, unmerciful, and decorated on all sides by his material veneer. (*Acts Andr*. 62)

In this passage, references to feminized forms of speech such as gossiping and magic reappear. These accusations were hurled at Andrew in the beginning of the story. Now the tables have turned. It is Aegeates who deals in slander and magic, and thus is womanish—less a man than Andrew and Stratocles. The text thus not only defends the heroes against accusations about deviant masculinity, but also accuses the villain of effeminate behavior. The *Acts* engages in the same strategy of feminizing its opponents as the Pastoral Epistles does.[82] A further "shaming device" occurs when Maximilla, Aegeates wife, is called a "wise man" by Andrew, thus contrasting Aegeates' feminine behavior to Maximilla's masculinity.[83]

The extent to which Aegeates deviates from the masculine protocol of self-restraint and courage has comical proportions. Several scenes invite laughter at Aegeates expense. In one scene he sits on the chamber pot in what he thinks is the privacy of his own bedroom (13). What he does not know is that the Andrew and his followers are present, but "sealed" by Andrew so they are invisible. István Czachesz has argued that scatological humor is used in the Apocryphal Acts as a way to let the enemies of Christianity suffer. Aegeates is ridiculed and his power parodied: "Aegeates receives his visitors sitting on a strange throne, a *sella pertusa*, which is a parody of royal dignity."[84] Later the reader is offered a glimpse of Aegeates

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[82] Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender. Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles*, 193–201.

[83] For masculine women as a "shaming device", see Moore and Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," 262.

[84] István Czachesz, "'Whatever Goes into the Mouth …'," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 65, 68.

in bed with Euclia (18). She has invited some of her fellow slaves into the bedroom to prove that she is sleeping with her master, who thinks she is his own wife. Yet again, Aegeates is being watched in a very private moment, this time by his slaves. There is a certain voyeristic glee in these episodes. Jan Bremmer understands the ridiculing of the Roman official as a way for Greeks to express their opinion about their rulers.[85] In my view these scenes ridicule the powerful man who does not have power over himself and his emotions and therefore makes himself a laughing-stock to the whole world.

Despite his inability to control himself, Aegeates has enormous power over others. He displays dominance, the other Roman protocol of masculinity. As a householder, prominent citizen and magistrate to the emperor, he tortures and kills his slaves, threatens his wife and crucifies the stranger who is causing uproar in his province. But in his total lack of self-restraint, Aegeates has undermined his claim to dominance. He is "a man who has the power to do whatever he wants, but lacks the necessary power over himself,"[86] and he is therefore truly pitiable. His power proves futile, and he ends up killing himself in his misery (64). Janice Anderson and Stephen Moore describe a similar masculinity in *4 Maccabees*. The Maccabean martyrs show true courage (ἀνδρεία) in their defiance of torture and death (4 Macc 7:20–23), while the Palestinian ruler, Antiochus, is not able to control his rage (8:2). Just as in the *Acts of Andrew*, the stress is on self-restraint rather than dominance, and the powerful are ridiculed for their lack of self-restraint. Is the masculinity in 4 Maccabees and the *Acts of Andrew*, then, a subversive masculinity? Anderson and Moore conclude that 4 Maccabees "both subverts and supports the ancient hegemonic construction of masculinity."[87] On the one hand, it modifies the concept by elevating self-mastery over mastery of others. But on the other, the martyrs master Antiochus: "so that mastery of others is still central and still celebrated."[88] Such an ambiguity is also at play in the *Acts of Andrew*. In a similar fashion, Andrew and Maximilla—a suspect stranger and a woman—both overpower Aegeates. Maximilla does so by refusing to succumb to his sexual invitations, and Andrew by resisting the chance to be released from the cross. In the *Acts* there is, then, a subversion

[85] Bremmer, "Man, Magic and Martyrdom in the Acts of Andrew," 21–22.

[86] Ivarsson, "A Man has to Do What a Man has to Do: Protocols of Masculine Sexual Behavior in 1 Corinthians 6–7," 187.

[87] Moore and Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," 251.

[88] Moore and Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," 273.

of the type of persons who possess superior masculinity, but not of the protocols themselves. There is, however, a certain malleability in where the stress may be put, leaning towards self-control rather than dominance.

The Ideal Woman

The ideal woman in this narrative is a powerful, upper-class woman. Maximilla is the wife of the proconsul, and is the powerful mistress of such an important household. In many ways, Maximilla does not live up to the ideal of the upper-class wife, but is rather an insubordinate and subversive woman. Aegeates complains that Maximilla never obeys him (31) and that arguing with her is useless (23). There are three areas in which she seems to deviate. She worships another God than him, she moves around the city without letting him know her whereabouts, and she is unwilling to have sex with him.

The problems caused by a wife's choice of another religion than her husband's are a recurring theme in early Christian writings.[89] Such a choice posed a challenge to the prerogatives of the head of the household, the δεσπότης or *paterfamilias*.[90] Plutarch discourages religious independence in wives:

> It is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only those gods that her husband believes in, and shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find favour.[91] (*Conj. praec.*, 140d [Babbitt, LCL])

Maximilla quite literally opens the door to her bedroom (κοιτών, 6;16), and it is here the group of believers receive the "seal" (σφραγίς, 10). It is, of course, this religious choice of Maximilla's that generates the narrative's course of events. However, it is her movements about the city and her refusal to have sex that seem to trouble Aegeates the most, not her religious interest per se. By deploying Euclia to the marriage bed, disguised as the willing wife, Maximilla is not only free from her marital duties, but acquires freedom of movement as well. Thus she can go out at night to visit Andrew or invite him to her bedroom. On several occasions Maximilla leaves the praetorium to

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[89] See e.g. 1Pet 3:1–6; 1Clem 6:1–4; as well as the numerous instances in the Apocryphal Acts. For a thorough discussion, see MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion. The Power of the Hysterical Woman*.

[90] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 236.

[91] For a similar sentiment, see also Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 9.14.

visit Andrew, first at some undisclosed location (19–20), later in prison (32; 34; 37). Aegeates, suspecting as much from his unruly wife, places guards at her bedroom door, as well as by the prison gates (31). In order to come and go unnoticed, Maximilla changes her clothing (20), and so does Iphidama (28).

Maximilla invites other men into her bedroom, but refuses to have sex with her husband. She spends her nights with Andrew, never leaving his side (13; 15). Seemingly, Maximilla is licentious, rather than chaste. Saundra Schwartz has shown how the *Acts of Andrew* plays on the literary *topos* of the adulterous wife.[92] Aegeates suspects that she is cheating on him (23), and his slaves accuse her of being in love with Andrew (25). When confronted, Maximilla admits to being in love:

> I am in love [φιλῶ], Aegeates. I am in love, and the object of my love is not of this world and therefore is imperceptible to you. Night and day it kindles and enflames me with love [στοργῇ] for it … Let me have intercourse [προσομιλεῖν] and take my rest with it alone. (*Acts Andr.* 23)

The language is very physical, employing terms connected to passion and love-making (φιλέω, στοργή, προσομιλέω).[93] The reader, however, is once again in the know. Maximilla plays hide and seek with her husband, not because she has a lover, but because she wants to avoid sexual contact with her husband. Maximilla avoids sexual intercourse with Aegeates, but for a long time she does not tell him so directly. Rather, she uses Euclia as her surrogate body. When Aegeates finally discovers the truth he is shocked and dismayed. It is not only about the sex, however. Aegeates wants children and pleads with his wife to return to the marriage bed:

> If you would be the woman you once were, living together with me as we are accustomed to [συμβιοῦσά μοι]—sleeping with me, having sex with me, conceiving children with me [συγκαθεύδουσά μοι, συγγινομένη, συντεκνοῦσα]—I would treat you well in every way. (*Acts Andr.* 36)

Aegeates also appeals to the contract he once drew up with her parents regarding marriage. He is not successful, however, and towards the end of the tale we learn that "the wretch died childless" (ἄτεκνος ὁ δεινὸς ἐτελεύτησεν, 65). By refusing to perform her procreative role, Maximilla is seriously deviating from expectations about the married woman.

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[92] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 268–269.

[93] See LSJ.

In other respects Maximilla lives up to her role as an upper-class woman married to a powerful householder. She is in command of domestic slaves, she functions as a patron and she displays the female virtues of silence (ἡσυχία) and modesty (σωφροσύνη). First, Maximilla is a typical householder's wife (δέσποινα, 14) in her attitude towards her slaves. She commands, and both Iphidama and Euclia are obedient to her. The relationship between Maximilla and Iphidama, though cloaked in metaphorical sisterhood, is clearly a slave-mistress relationship where one commands and the other obeys. For example, Maximilla commands Iphidama to fetch Andrew for her: "Sister, go (γενοῦ ἀδελφή) to the blessed one so that he may come here to pray and lay his hand on me while Aegeates is sleeping" (15). Iphidama rushes off without delay: "ἡ δὲ μὴ μελλήσασα δρομαία." Later, Maximilla sends her slave to the prison, to find out how Andrew is doing. Her instruction is again given in imperatives: "go … and find out" (ἄπελθε … μάθε, 27). Judith Perkins has noted how the Greek novels' representation of slaves and workers is from the idealized perspective of slave owners. The material dependency of the slave is often concealed in the text by describing the relationship in emotional terms; a maneuver she calls an elite "veil of power."[94] For example, in Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale*, the hero's old paedagogus drowns himself when his master goes away to sea, supposedly because he loved the young master so much (1.14.4–5).[95] In a similar manner, Maximilla and Iphidama are depicted as "sisters" and friends in a way that conceals Iphidama's material dependence on her mistress.[96]

Second, Maximilla functions as a patron. She seems to be the patron of Andrew and the group around him, receiving them in her house. The prominence of Maximilla's bedroom as the primary meeting place of "the brethren" (6; 13) has been noted by many interpreters.[97] After Aegeates returns from Rome, it seems that the Christians also have another gathering place, where Maximilla goes to see them (19–29). I would argue that

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[94] Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 58–59.

[95] See Perkins' discussion of this passage, Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 59.

[96] Some commentators also miss or elide the master-slave nature of their relationship. Burrus calls Iphidama "a female friend." Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy. Women in the Stories of Apocryphal Acts* 36.

[97] See e.g. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 217; Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 52; Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 296–297.

Maximilla is portrayed as the patron of a house church that gathers in her house. Riet van Bremen has shown the extent to which women in the Eastern part of the Empire partook in public patronage, or euergetism. Wealthy women would pay for public meals, distributions, oil provision, the founding of games and building projects.[98] Osiek and MacDonald argue that early Christian women, in a similar fashion, engaged in both public and private patronage, hosting Christian gatherings and extending benefactions to individual leaders.[99] Maximilla's private patronage of Andrew can be seen in that she sends her slave to see to his welfare in prison (28–29) and that she takes responsibility for the burial of Andrew after his crucifixion (64). Although it was a common practice, a woman's patronage could still be misconstrued as an intrusion into the masculine sphere, and even understood as compromising the woman's sexual reputation.[100] The misconceptions and accusations around Maximilla's involvement with Andrew play on these notions and construct her relationship with Andrew (and Christ) as somehow erotic.[101] Andrew, however, does not quite fit the role of subordinate client. The apostle's position in this text is unique, and therefore he cannot be portrayed as simply a recipient of favors: he is also himself a benefactor. Maximilla calls Andrew "our benefactor [εὐεργέτης], (second to the Lord himself)" (27). God is, in this text, the ultimate patron and Andrew, as his intermediary, has bestowed the benefactions of healing and salvation on Maximilla.

The text also seems to claim that Maximilla is of more noble birth than Aegeates. Her parents chose him as her spouse "without regard to wealth, heredity, or reputation, considering only the kindness of my soul" (36). Also, we are told that "her pedigree far outstripped his [πολλῷ αὐτοῦ διασημοτάτην τοῦ γένους ἕνεκεν ὑπάρχουσαν]" (24). If there is a difference in status/class between the spouses, is this the source of Maximilla's power?[102] If so, her

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[98] Bremen, *The Limits of Participation. Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, 195–196.

[99] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 214–219.

[100] Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life*, 90.

[101] Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," esp. 49–51.

[102] For class difference as a potential for marital problems, see Plutarch: "In like manner, some who have won wives of noble birth or wealth, instead of making themselves better, try to humble their wives, with the idea that they shall have more authority over their wives if they are reduced to a state of humility. But as one pays heed to the size of his horse in using the rein, so in using the rein on his wife he ought to pay heed to her position." (*Conj. praec.* 139b [Babbitt, LCL]).

superior status parallels her moral superiority over against her husband. Such a difference in status might also strengthen the argument for the textual representation of Maximilla as a patron.[103]

Third, Maximilla keeps quiet most of the time, and is definitely not a public speaker. She possesses the female virtue of ἡσυχία. When Maximilla speaks, it is to those within the circle of household and family: husband, brother-in-law, slaves. In the Christian group, she is portrayed as a listener (19; 37). Andrew addresses several lengthy speeches to Maximilla (33; 37–41), but she never replies to them. Even when it is clear that she speaks with Andrew, what she says is not narrated (34; 37). She is present in the circle of Christian philosophers, but she does not participate actively in the discussion.[104] After Andrew's death, she chooses "a life holy and quiet, [βίον σεμνὸν καὶ ἤρεμον]" spending her time with the brethren (64).

Closely connected to the virtue of silence is, of course, her sexual virtue, her σωφροσύνη. Aegeates repeatedly praises his wife for her chastity (14; 23). A good Roman wife was supposed to remain faithful to her husband, although infidelity on the husband's part was to be expected and accepted.[105] Aegeates does not invoke this sexual double standard but seems rather relaxed about Maximilla's supposed affair. He is willing to forgive her, as she has forgiven him his sexual exploits in the past (23). But rather than lowering the standard, Maximilla, because of Andrew's preaching, heightens it. Maximilla's new interpretation of σωφροσύνη, in which she turns away from marital relations to no sexual relations at all, is the most important and elaborated aspect of her conversion into Christianity.

Good and Bad Slaves

The deployment and description of slaves in the *Acts of Andrew* is worth noticing. In addition to unnamed slaves belonging to Aegeates and Stratocles, there are three named slaves: the favorite slaves of Stratocles (Alcman) and Maximilla (Iphidama) and, finally, the "bad" slave Euclia. Apart from the two Christian slaves, Alcman and Iphidama, all slaves are portrayed negatively in this tale. Albert Harrill has argued that early Christian narratives

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[103] Similarly, Osiek and MacDonald find it probable that Prisc(ill)a was an independent patron, because of her higher status than Aquila. Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 32.

[104] Schroeder makes a similar observation. Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 58.

[105] Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 36.

used slave *topoi* well known in classical culture: "From one side came the 'faithful slave' of familial loyalty; the flip side brought the 'enemy slave' of domestic betrayal."[106] We may recognize this type/anti-type in the *Acts*. Iphidama and Alcman are presented as "faithful slaves," whereas Euclia, on the other hand, fits the stereotype of the "enemy slave."

The healing of Alcman is the event that introduces Stratocles to Andrew and leads to his own and his slave's conversion. Alcman is introduced and consistently referred to as the παῖς of Stratocles (2–4). Only after a while do we learn that his name is Alcman (4). Παῖς, "boy," is an ambiguous designation, relating to age as well as slave status. Such labelling underscored the idea that a male slave, even when he was grown up, was never a real man.[107] It is clear from the context that Alcman is a slave (2), but is he also a child? As the demon leaves his body, it speaks "with a masculine voice" (ἔπανδρον φωνὴν, 5), perhaps alluding to the contrast with Alcman's own puerile one. Whether child or adult, Alcman is clearly of special value to Stratocles. He "loved him dearly" (ἔστεργε πάνυ, 2), swears that he cannot live without him (2) and is utterly distraught at the sight of him possessed. It has been argued that the phrasing hints at a pederastic relationship between Stratocles and Alcman.[108]

Iphidama acts dutifully (πιστῶς, 28) and is called faithful (πιστοτάτη, 28) by Andrew. Her role as messenger and intermediary between her mistress and Andrew is a typical slave's task. She is portrayed as running to deliver her message (28), which is another stock feature of slave representation. The *servus currens* type scene was common in Greco-Roman comedy and ridiculed the slave messenger who unnecessarily complicated a simple task.[109] Iphidama does not do anything of her own devising, nor does she speak without being spoken to. The only direct speech by Iphidama is a short prayer to Jesus, outside the prison gates (28). While Maximilla is deserving

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[106] James Albert Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms," in *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 232.

[107] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 24.

[108] Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 124. See also Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts," 18–19.

[109] J. Albert Harrill, "The Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda (Acts 12.13–16): A Piece of Greco-Roman Comedy," *New Testament Studies* 46, no. 1 (2000): 151–152. One of Aegeates' slaves also runs, to capture Andrew (26). On the use of the *servus currens* type in Acts 12:13–16 see also Solevåg, "Prayer in Acts and the Pastoral Epistles: Intersections of Gender and Class."

of several long speeches by Andrew, only one short prayer is offered for Iphidama. In this prayer the focus is on Iphidama's safe return to her mistress. Iphidama seems to be nothing but an extension of Maximilla. She has no personality or will of her own, but functions as a facilitator, "doing the master's will in faceless attendance and total subordination."[110]

Even if Stratocles claims that he will give up all his possessions, and Maximilla calls Iphidama "sister," neither seems to free their slaves. Stratocles carries his own oil flask to the gymnasium after conversion, symbolically performing the task of a slave. Although he has supposedly given up his possessions, he is still referred to as the owner of many slaves at this point (25). Euclia is in fact the only slave who is freed in the *Acts*, and the tale of her fate could easily change the mind of any slave who nursed hopes of being set free.

Although she is obedient, like Iphidama, the text portrays Euclia as a "bad girl." She is consistently described with bad characteristics: she boasts (καυχωμένη, τῷ καυχᾶσθαι, 18, ἐκαυχήσατο, 22); flatters herself (ἐπαιρομένη, 18); steals (18); and blackmails her mistress (18, 22). Even Euclia's body shape, it seems, betrays her sexual licentiousness: "She [Maximilla] summoned a shapely and exceedingly wanton servant-girl [παιδίσκην πάνυ εὔμορφον και φύσει ἄτακτον ὑπερβολῆ] named Euclia and told her what she [Euclia] delighted in and desired (17)." Euclia is portrayed as the opposite of Maximilla. She supposedly takes delight in her sexual encounters with Aegeates, in contrast to Maximilla, who wants to avoid this at all costs. She is Maximilla's fleshly counterpart, her "evil twin," as Schwartz has observed.[111] She is portrayed as a braggart and a thief who is concerned with her looks, whereas Maximilla only has eyes for her purity and her eternal fate. Euclia's main character flaw is her hubris. She boasts to her fellow slaves and shows them her new place as "mistress" in her master's bed. She thinks she can rise above her station, but she wants too much. Aegeates kills her because she has betrayed family secrets (22). Euclia's out-of-place speech has caused trouble in the household and her punishment is highly symbolic: Aegeates "cut out Euclia's tongue, mutilated her, and ordered her thrown outside" (23). The message seems to be: If she had kept her tongue, she would not have lost it. Here, as we saw above concerning Iphidama's relationship to Maximilla, the

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[110] Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms," 231.

[111] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 301.

text employs a "veil of power." By claiming that Maximilla's plan coincides with what Euclia also wants, the text circumvents the slave's material dependency and describes it in emotional terms. Since it is, according to the text, Euclia's own desire to have sex with Aegeates, Maximilla is freed from any ethical responsibility for Euclia's actions as well as for her terrible death.

It has been suggested that it is the heroine's sexual renunciation that moves the plot in the Apocryphal Acts towards its inevitable ending in martyrdom.[112] However, at several decisive points in the *Acts of Andrew* it is a slave's out-of-place speech or action that propels the story forward. It is Aegeates' slaves that reveal Maximilla's escape from the bedroom and tell Aegeates. It is Maximilla's slaves that reveal the Euclia subterfuge. Supposedly driven by greed, they act as "domestic enemies," as betrayers of family secrets.[113] Further, they lie, feign loyalty, accept bribes and quarrel with one another (21–22). Such slaves have the devil as their father, and act on his instigation, according to the *Acts of Andrew* (21). It is a slave who points out Andrew in the crowd and tells Aegeates how he has "infatuated" both Stratocles and Maximilla (25). This slave, like Euclia, is described as behaving out of place. He is acting more like a brother than a servant towards his master (26). All these slaves receive their due punishment: they are tortured and crucified. Beatings, threats of beatings, torture and executions consistently accompany the references to slaves in the *Acts of Andrew*.

Salvation and Childbearing in the Acts of Andrew

Childbearing and salvation discourses intersect in several instances in the *Acts of Andrew*. In what follows, I will discuss Stratocles' metaphorical childbearing and how it is used to create a reproductive homoeroticism. The "love triangle" between Maximilla, Aegeates and Andrew also connects salvation and childbearing, in this case not only metaphorically. Maximilla's salvation is dependent on sexual renunciation, and in her new state she is both the bride of Christ and a new Eve. Finally, I discuss the fate of Euclia. This slave's death has not received much scholarly attention, but in my opinion this tale serves as the highly symbolic negative counterpart to Maximilla's conversion.

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112 Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 54.

113 Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms," 232.

The Male Birthing of the Word

The only person who gives birth in the *Acts of Andrew* is a man, namely Stratocles. This upper-class philosopher's conversion to Christianity is described through the metaphor of childbearing. Andrew recognizes the signs of a "troubled" soul and vows that he will "bring out into the open the person now latent within you" (7). He continues:

> ἀποκύησον δὲ τέκνον ὃ ἔχεις, καὶ μὴ μόνον ὠδῖσιν σεαυτὸν παραδίδου. οὔκ εἰμι ἀμύητος μαιευτικῆς, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μαντικῆς. ἔστι τι ὃ ἀποτίκτεις, ὃ ἐγὼ φιλῶ. ἔστι τι ὃ σιγᾷς, ὃ ἐγὼ ἐρῶ, ὃ καὶ εἰς ἔνδον ἐγὼ ἀναθρέψω.
>
> Bring to birth the child you are carrying and do not give yourself over to labour pains alone. I am no novice at midwifery and divination. I desire what you are bearing. I love what you are suppressing. I will suckle what is within you.
>
> (*Acts Andr.* 7)

Shortly thereafter, Andrew continues to elaborate on the childbearing metaphor:

> It is not right for you to conceal your labour pains [τὰς σὰς ὠδῖνας] even from your peers. Take the example of a woman in labour [ἡ ὠδίνουσα γυνὴ]: When the labour pains [τῶν πόνων] overcome her and the foetus [τοῦ βρέφους] is forced by some power to come forth—not to stay within but to be squeezed outside—the foetus becomes obvious and noticeable to the attending women [ταῖς παροῦσαις γυναιξὶ] who take part in such mysteries [τῶν αὐτῶν μυστηρίων] (it was the foetus itself [αὐτὸ τὸ τεχθὲν] that cried out when the mother [τῆς μητρός] cried out earlier). Then after the birth [τὸ τεχθῆναι], these initiates at last provide for the new-born [τῷ βρέφει] whatever care they know, so that, in so far as it is up to them, the foetus might be born alive. Likewise, Stratocles, my child, we too must not be passive but bring your offspring [τὰ σὰ κυήματα] into the open, so that they may be registered [ἀναγράφηται] and be brought to the gift of saving words [εἰς ἐπίδοσιν τῶν σωτηρίων λόγων] by many kindred [πλειόνων τῶν συγγενῶν], whose associate I found you to be.
>
> (*Acts Andr.* 9)

Andrew's description of this "birthing scene" draws on Platonic philosophic discourse, which used childbearing as an image of philosophical awakening. However, the scene reveals a certain knowledge of physical childbearing as well. Andrew describes a birthing room with a woman in labor, a midwife and female attendants, quite similar to the motif on the terracotta relief from Ostia, described in Chapter Two. A similar description of a birthing room can be found in Soranus:

> There should be three woman helpers, capable of allaying the anxiety of the gravida even if they do not happen to have any experience with birth … Furthermore it is proper that the face of the gravida should be visible to the

> midwife who shall allay her anxiety, assuring her that here is nothing to fear and that delivery will be easy. (*Gyn.* 2.5)

When Stratocles gives birth, the Christian "brothers" are described as female birth attendants. They are, however, less active than Soranus' helpers. They are spectators, whose role is to witness, but, as disciples, or fellow initiates, also to learn. The text plays on the similarity between the words for midwifery and divination (μαιευτικῆς … μαντικῆς, 7). Ultimately, it is for these initiates that the birthing takes place. They are the beneficiaries of the "gift of saving words" (9). Assistant women at childbirth also served as witnesses that the child had not been swapped, and the scene seems to allude to this tradition. According to Roman law, only legitimate children could be registered, and the registration was used as proof of a person's age and citizen status.[114] The helpers, or "brothers," thus serve as witnesses and guarantors for the legitimacy of Stratocles' conversion.[115]

Another resemblance to medical childbearing discourse is the passivity of the parturient mother. Both the midwife with helpers and the fetus itself were considered to be active forces, whereas the mother partook mainly in terms of being in pain.[116] Similarly, in the *Acts*, it is asserted that the fetus is squeezed out by "some force." It does not seem to be by the effort of the birthing "woman," i.e. Stratocles. According to Andrew, it is not even the woman who screams, but the baby who cries through her (9). As Andrew draws the analogy between a woman in labor and the process of Stratocles' conversion, he underscores that they (Andrew and Stratocles) must not be silent (μὴ ἠρεμεῖν, 9). After all, it is "saving words" he is giving birth to. Thus, their articulation is of crucial importance.

According to ancient medical discourse, it was not self-evident that the mother was the best woman to suckle the newborn. Rather than giving the newborn the breast immediately, explained Soranus, it should be given to a wet-nurse or be fed goat's milk or honey water (*Gyn.* 2.18). When Stratocles' "baby" is born, Andrew promises to suckle it himself: "I will suckle what is within you" (7). Apparently, he is not only midwife but wet-nurse as well. His ability to breastfeed seems to be better than the "mother's", thus underscoring the passivity of the woman in labor. The two most active

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114 Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, 145.

115 Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 299.

116 Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science*, 212.

participants in this scene, then, are Andrew and the fetus—i.e. Stratocles' inner human being.

It is in Maximilla's bedroom that Stratocles gives birth. The spatial location of the birthing scene is the κοιτών where the mistress of the house should have brought forth heirs, had she not been persuaded to abstain from sexual intercourse and thus avoid pregnancy and childbearing altogether. Kate Cooper has argued that the *Acts of Andrew* "borrows from and inverts the ideology of *eros* and the city's regeneration" from the ancient novels.[117] Why do we find such imagery in a text where physical childbearing is devalued? I would argue that through this scene, the image of childbearing is reclaimed, and Maximilla's bedroom is transformed into a new kind of birthing room. Rather than a regeneration of the city, there is a regeneration of the community through the male believers' metaphorical childbearing.

The strong influence of Platonic thought that many have found in the *Acts of Andrew* is also apparent in the use of childbearing imagery.[118] Andrew, like Socrates in the *Theatetus*, diagnoses his patient: he is pregnant and suffering from labor pains (*Theaet*. 148e). The metaphor of birth also comes up in Socrates' speech in the *Symposium*, where he relates a conversation he had with the wise woman Diotima. Diotima of Mantinea likens the (male) pursuit of *eros* with begetting. To love is "begetting on a beautiful thing by means of both the body and the soul" (*Symp*. 206b [Lamb, LCL]). The discourse in this Platonic dialogue has some striking parallels to the childbearing discourse in this scene in the *Acts of Andrew*. First, both deal with immortality. "[T]he mortal nature ever seeks, as best it can, to be immortal," (207d) says Diotima. There are different ways of attaining immortality, as she explains, either through begetting children or through the achievement of remembrance of valor (ἀρετή) and distinction (δόξα) (208d–e). This is the difference between pregnancy in body and pregnancy of soul (208e–209a), the latter being the more elevated, as she elaborates:

> So when a man's soul is so far divine that it is made pregnant with these [sobriety/ σωφροσύνη and justice/δικαιοσύνη] from his youth, and on attaining manhood immediately desires to bring forth and beget, he too, I imagine, goes forth seeking the beautiful object whereon he may do his begetting, since he will never beget upon the ugly. (*Symp*. 209b [Lamb, LCL])

In the *Acts of Andrew*, like the *Symposium*, the begetting of children is replaced by another way of achieving immortality—the salvation that can

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[117] Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 45–46.

[118] See Chapter Two for a discussion of Platonic childbearing imagery.

be attained through Andrew's preaching. Thus, both texts focus on the superiority of such offspring of the soul.[119] Andrew's androcentric image of childbearing is set up as an alternative to the bodily begetting that Aegeates desires. He wants to have children with Maximilla, while the Christian group of philosophers attaches no value to human procreation. The narrator remarks towards the end of the story that Aegeates, "the wretch," died childless (64). Even the lower form of immortality according to Plato's schema—remembrance through offspring—is not accorded Aegeates. Vigdis Songe-Møller notes that the metaphorical language in the *Symposium* uses images of reproduction and childbearing to exalt philosophy as the highest form of reproduction. I propose that a very similar inversion of the meaning of childbearing takes place in the *Acts*.

A second similarity to Platonic childbearing imagery is the focus on male exclusivity and homoeroticism. Songe-Møller points out that Platonic philosophy has "immortality as its objective and a radical homo-eroticism as its precondition."[120] In the *Symposium*, Diotima highlights the community that men have in education and philosophy: "Equally too with him he shares the nurturing [συνεκτρέφει] of what is begotten [τὸ γεννηθὲν], so that men in this condition enjoy a far fuller community [κοινωνίαν] with each other than that which comes with children, and a far surer friendship, since the children of their union are fairer and more deathless." (209d). The two main players in the begetting and birthing of "saving words" in the *Acts* are Andrew and Stratocles. Andrew says that Stratocles' suffering in childbearing is instructive to the group around, to the "initiates." Unlike the group around Socrates, Andrew's initiates probably also include women converts, the most important among whom is Maximilla, in whose room they are gathered as Stratocles' birthing takes place. However, in all the passages that are concerned with teaching and philosophy, the women become invisible. They are not mentioned, and the group is referred to as "the brothers" (ἀδελφοί). Moreover, although all the believers share a common Father in God, and are thus συγγενεῖς, Andrew and Stratocles share a special love and fellowship (κοινωνός, 9; κοινωνέω, 42). The relationship between Andrew and Stratocles has many aspects: midwife and parturient mother; teacher and pupil; philo-

[119] The *Symposium* continues: "Every one would choose to have got children such as these rather than the human sort—merely from turning a glance upon Homer and Hesiod and all the other good poets, and envying the fine offspring they leave behind to procure them a glory immortally renewed in the memory of men." (209e).

[120] Songe-Møller, *Philosophy Without Women. The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, 112.

sophical lovers; father and child. Andrew's fatherhood is first and foremost in relation to Stratocles' inner being. Andrew is a Platonic begetter—an inseminator, so to speak—who sows the *spermata* of truth in his disciple.[121] Stratocles stresses this aspect of the relationship towards the end of the story, in a scene from the prison:

> τὰ μὲν σπέρματα τῶν σωτηρίων λόγων δέδεγμαι, σοῦ ὄντος μοι τοῦ σπορέως. τὸ δὲ ἀναβλαστῆσαι ταῦτα καὶ ἐκφῦναι οὐκ ἑτέρου ἀλλ' ἢ σοῦ δεῖται, Ἀνδρέα μακαριώτατε.
>
> I received the seeds of the words of salvation while you were my sower; for them to sprout and reproduce requires no one else but you, blessed Andrew. (*Acts Andr.* 44)

This passage links back to the childbearing scene and creates a continuous imagery of conception as well as birth. Andrew sows his *spermata*, which contain words of salvation, and the result is the birth of Stratocles' inner being. Echoing ancient ideas about conception, Andrew, as the father, is the bearer of the active principle—soul, mind, wisdom, words—whereas Stratocles, as the mother, acts as receptacle, as fertile soil. Once his inner being is born, however, Stratocles too achieves the ability to sow the seeds of salvation. We have, then, a male childbearer, a male midwife, and, most importantly, a male begetter. All aspects of conception, pregnancy and parturition have become male in this text. Turid Karlsen Seim has pointed out that such an allocation of the female world of pregnancy and birth does not characterize the man in female terms but "might equally well express male completion and omnipotence having consumed or usurped the female."[122] By means of the imagery of childbearing, the women in the text have in fact been relegated to the sidelines. It seems that the reproductive capacity to regenerate the believing community belongs exclusively to men, not to women.

Reproductive Homoeroticism

The male conception and childbearing of the *Acts of Andrew* seemingly have nothing to do with the body, but go on in the mind or the soul—through discourse, rather than intercourse. Nevertheless, the language that is used

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[121] Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 53.

[122] Seim, "Motherhood and the Making of Fathers in Antiquity: Contextualizing Genetics in the Gospel of John," 98.

in the narrative is erotic.[123] As I noted above, Stratocles' relationship to his favorite slave seems to be of a pederastic nature. "I cannot live without him," Stratocles exclaims when Alcman is struck by a demon. Alcman is healed by Andrew, and later receives the seal together with the other believers (10). David Konstan has argued that the childbearing scene "serves in part as an exegesis or elaboration of Stratocles' earlier infatuation with the boy Alcman, substituting the inner, spiritual child which Stratocles has begun to develop for the outer and carnal object of his affection."[124] Konstan also points out that despite this Platonic distinction between two steps in the passion for the beautiful, Andrew's healing activity is meant to assuage Stratocles' grief over the illness of his beloved: "The effect of Andrew's action in this case, at least, is to salvage a powerfully sentimental relationship, not to destroy it."[125]

The relationship between Andrew and Stratocles is also cast in erotic terms. The two profess strong, mutual love for each other. As in the Platonic discourses, the union of lover and beloved is fused with the philosopher's mystical union with the divine.[126] In the *Acts* there is an added element of (con)fusion, in that the figures of Andrew and Christ merge in some of the discourses. Hence Andrew's climactic speech to Stratocles in the prison:

> Do you know to whom I have said these things? Has each engaged your mind? Has it reached your intellectual faculty? Do I still have the one who listened to me? Do I find myself in you? Is there someone in you speaking whom I see as my own? Does he love [ἀγαπᾷ] the one who has spoken in me and does he desire [βούλεται] to have fellowship [κοινωνῆσαι] with him? Does he wish to be united [συνενωθῆναι] with him? Does he strive to become loved [φιλωθῆναι] by him? Does he long to be yoked with him? Does he find any rest in him? Does he have anywhere to lay his head? (*Acts Andr.* 42)

Christ seems to be the object of passion and love in this passage, but the voice of Christ fades into the background in the continuation of the discourse. Andrew goes on to take Stratocles' hand and exclaim: "I have the one I sought [ἐζήτουν]. I have found the one I desired [ἐπόθουν]. I hold the one I loved. I rest because of the one I have waited for." (43) Just as heartfelt and passionate is Stratocles' answer: "For you yourself may leave, and I know

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[123] Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy."

[124] Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts," 19.

[125] Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts," 20.

[126] Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 50.

well that it is good that you do so. But after this, where and in whom will I seek and find your concern [ἐπιμέλειαν] and love [στοργήν]?" (44). Stratocles and Andrew love each other passionately, and their pursuit of each other's love, through enlightened discourse, benefits the believing community.

The homoerotic language that frames the relationship between Stratocles and Alcman as well as Stratocles and Andrew, begs the question of the place of sexual renunciation in this text. And, more specifically, whether sexual renuncication is understood as a prerequisite for salvation. Nothing is explicitly said about any change in sexual behavior after Stratocles converts. Admittedly, the reference to Stratocles' decision to live alone (8) might indicate a resolve to live in abstinence. However, in the description of Stratocles' conversion it is his renunciation of *property* that is highlighted. Stratocles spends the nights in Andrew's company, constantly asking him questions and disturbing the apostle's sleep by his enthusiastic interruptions (8). Since sexual renunciation is so important in Maximilla's conversio, should sexual abstinence be implied also in the case of Stratocles? I think it is important to note the different emphases in the male, compared to the female, conversion story. Since the *Acts of Andrew* is not preserved in its entirety, it is perhaps impossible to arrive at a conclusive answer to this question. As the extant passages of the *Acts* do not explicitly state that any man renounces sexual relations, it seems unfounded to project sexual renunciation onto Stratocles or Andrew, and thus Encratism onto the text, only from the example of Maximilla. This silence about male sexual renunciation, together with the homoerotic language that frames the relationship between Stratocles and Andrew, leaves an ambiguity about the role of sexuality for men in the ideology of this text. This is an ambiguity that cannot be solved on the basis of the textual evidence we have, but must remain unresolved.

The New Testament usages of the childbearing metaphor, discussed in Chapter Two, differ quite strongly from the usage in the *Acts of Andrew*. In the *Acts*, the image of childbearing is not used to express apocalyptic terror and anxiety, nor does it express the communal longing for and expectation of deliverance within the community, as was typical of NT usage. For instance, in Gal 4:19, John 16:21 and Rom 8:22–25 the believers—male and female—are cast as either childbearers or embryos in the process of being born. The focus in these texts is on the pain and longing of the birthing process, and the end result is still open. The *Acts* differs from this discursive tradition because it draws on the Platonic tradition of the childbearing of the soul.

Some interpreters claim that there is a complete gender reversal in the *Acts of Andrew*—Maximilla becomes male, while Andrew and Stratocles

take on female roles of birthing, midwifery and nursing.[127] As I understand it, there is gender reversal only in a transitional stage. Stratocles takes on female features only in his conversion process. His groaning and crying are temporary, and through the bearing of his inner human, he becomes articulate: "he suffers [πάσχει] in order to become educated [παιδείας ἕνεκεν]" (7). He emerges on the other side as a better man than before, a philosopher initiated and trained. By the time Andrew himself is about to be executed, Stratocles is worthy to take over Andrew's position as conveyer of saving words:

> 'Stratocles my child,' Andrew responded, 'from now on I want you to keep your mind unwavering, and do not wait for advice from someone else, but take such advice from yourself.' (*Acts Andr.* 53)

Stratocles is urged *not* to be silent after his childbearing (9), just as Andrew is not silent. In contrast, Maximilla does not go through a transformation from silent to speaking after her conversion, but remains silent (64). Schwartz also notes how the homoerotic union between the two men relegates Maximilla to the sideline. It is only "in Stratocles that Andrew's message is metaphorically consummated," she concludes.[128] In other words, the male convert is the one that bears fruit and is able to generate new believers. Andrew produces such fruit—or offspring—in Stratocles, and Stratocles has the potential to produce it in his fellow disciples. Rather than a gender reversal, there is, towards the end, an identity-inversion. Stratocles does not become a woman: he becomes Andrew (42). Songe-Møller finds a similar reproduction of the self, or "likeness" in the homoerotic imagery in the *Symposium*. Through an "asexual birth, a kind of vegetative cloning" the philosopher does not bring forth a new individual but an "extension of a previous existence, of the 'source,' which in this case means the father."[129] Thus, not only does Stratocles give birth but so too does Andrew, in so far as he is the sower of the seeds, and the new being inside Stratocles is a clone of himself. In Platonic fashion he "begets on" Stratocles.

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[127] Rosamond C. Rodman, "Who's on Third? Reading *Acts of Andrew* as a Rhetoric of Resistance," *Semeia*, no. 79 (1997): 36–37; MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 237. In the case of Stratocles, MacDonald finds not only gender reversal but also a transformation from fighter to child. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 218.

[128] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 310–311.

[129] Songe-Møller, *Philosophy Without Women. The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, 109.

The childbearing metaphor is, in my view, used to bolster the idea that Stratocles is Andrew's heir and the community's new rightful leader after Andrew's death. The childbearing scene is his initiation, in which he receives the words from Andrew that contain salvation. The prison scene (chs. 42–45) confirms what was hoped for in the birthing room—that the child might live. Here, Andrew hands over to Stratocles authority over the community. From this moment, he is no longer to remain silent, but must speak to the benefit of the community. Although Stratocles is worried, he accepts that it is so. Salvation seems, then, to be latent in the words of the apostle, and transmitted through a male chain of succession.

In conclusion, the *Acts of Andrew* seems to draw on a variety of discourses related to childbearing, metaphorical and philosophical as well as medical. The relation to Platonic childbearing discourse seems, in my opinion, particularly strong, as childbearing is connected to immortality and reframed in a dialogue between two men. By applying the discourse of childbearing and midwifery to the male world of *philosophia*, *logos* and *paideia*, the metaphor of birth is used to legitimate male leadership and succession. I contend that the *Acts of Andrew* builds on the Platonic "notion of thought as a kind of perfect reproduction—perfect in the sense that it leads to immortality."[130] This type of childbearing thus also has a place in the soteriological economy of the text. Andrew sows the seeds of salvation in Stratocles, and he, in turn, will impart these life-giving words to others. Men are (re)productive when they engage in discourse. One might even say that homoerotic relationships are given a reproductive (and thus salvific) function. It is interesting then, that the story of the female convert is described in very different language.

Maximilla as Christ's Wife

Maximilla does not bear any children, either figuratively or literally. For this upper-class matron, procreation as well as sexuality is something that must be left behind as she enters the believing community. Through her vow of chastity, the heroine of this early Christian novel simultaneously assumes several different roles which will be examined in this section. She becomes the chaste bride of Christ; she becomes a new Eve; and she becomes male. Let us first look at the marriage metaphor.

As I have noted, the Apocryphal Acts share many features with the Greek novels. Among them is a concern for love and chastity.[131] In the *Acts of*

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[130] Songe-Møller, *Philosophy Without Women. The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, 112.
[131] Pervo, "Early Christian Fiction," 244.

Andrew it is, more particularly, the *topos* of the love triangle that is employed. Schwartz explains: "The catalyst for this noble martyrdom is paradoxical for its sheer banality: it is a love triangle—specifically, an adulterous triangle—although, ironically, without the sex."[132] The conflict in the story is caused when Andrew forms a relationship with Maximilla that upends her marital relations with Aegeates, so that a love triangle is formed.[133] Aegeates and his slaves suspect that Maximilla is cheating on him, and that the mysterious stranger Andrew is "the other guy." Maximilla even admits that she is in love. Maximilla invites Andrew to her bedroom, and as is typical for the adultery plot in the Greek novels, there is sneaking in and out of the house (chs. 19–20; 30–32) and dressing up in disguise (chs. 17; 20; 28), and there are slaves on hand to help conceal the illicit actions (chs. 17; 22; 28–29) as well as other slaves threatening to uncover them (chs. 18; 20–22; 24–26).[134] The twist in the plot is that Maximilla is not in love with Andrew but with Jesus. Her love is not external and carnal, but internal and pure. Just as Stratocles gives birth to an inner being, the object of Maximilla's love is an "inner man"—Jesus—not Andrew. She confesses to her husband when she is asked: "I am in love, Aegeates. I am in love, and the object of my love is not of this world and therefore imperceptible to you." (23). Maximilla is in love with Jesus, but Andrew is his earthly representative and it is he whom she repeatedly admits into her bedroom.

Maximilla's husband also represents something more than himself. Through Andrew's speeches we learn about the true nature of Aegeates: that he is on the side of the devil, and even related to him.[135] Early in the story, Andrew comes to Maximilla's bedroom at night to pray for her while her husband is away (chs. 15–16). In his prayer. Andrew redefines the love triangle, adding a typological level in relation to the two men: Aegeates represents the devil and Andrew represents Jesus.[136] This is an excerpt from his prayer:

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[132] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 268. See also Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 45–51.

[133] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 296. For somewhat different analyses of the narrative triangles, see Rodman, "Who's on Third? Reading *Acts of Andrew* as a Rhetoric of Resistance," 35; János Bolyki, "Triangles and What is Beyond Them. Literary, Historical and Theological Systems of Coordinates in the *Acts of Andrew*," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, *Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

[134] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 273–276.

[135] Pesthy, "Aegeates, the Devil in Person," 48.

[136] Schwartz does not consider such a typological level of the triangle.

> I ask you, God, Lord Jesus Christ, who knows the future, I entrust to you my child, the worthy Maximilla. May your word and power [ὁ λόγος καὶ ἡ δύναμις ἐν αὐτῇ] be mighty in her, and may the spirit that is in her struggle even against Aegeates, that insolent and hostile snake [ὑβριστὴν καὶ ἀντίδικον ὄφιν] … With respect to our savage and unbearable enemy [ἐχθρόν], cause her to sleep [κατακοίμησον] apart from her visible husband [τοῦ φαινομένου αὐτὴς ἀνδρός] and wed [ἅρμοσον] her to her inner husband [τῷ ἔσω ἀνδρί], whom you above all recognize, and for whose sake the entire mystery of your plan of salvation [σου μυστήριον τῆς οἰκονομίας] has been accomplished.
>
> (*Acts Andr.* 16)

The players in the triangle are reinterpreted and given new positions in this passage. By introducing the concepts of inner and outer husband, Aegeates—the cuckolded husband—assumes the place of the illicit lover. By calling Aegeates the outer, visible, but not the inner, true husband, he is shifted from his position as legal husband to that of illicit lover. Through the use of the image of marriage to Christ, sleeping with Aegeates in fact becomes adultery. Christ is the inner and true husband to whom Maximilla must pledge fidelity. Sex between Aegeates and Maximilla is made even more repulsive by linking Aegeates and the devil—the hostile snake and unbearable enemy. Maximilla's choices are either to remain faithful to Jesus, who is her true husband, or to cheat on him by sleeping with Aegeates. Andrew—the suspected lover—appears in the quotation above as a father figure officiating a wedding ceremony.[137] He entrusts his "child" to the future husband, Christ. Note also that God's mysterious plan for salvation is called a household management plan (οἰκονομία). This is similar to 1 Timothy, where God's plan, known to believers, is also called a household management plan (οἰκονομία θεοῦ, 1 Tim 1:4).

The *eros* of Greek novels, consummated in sexual passion, marriage and procreation, is transformed in the *Acts of Andrew* into Platonic *eros*.[138] Whereas the conversion of Stratocles and his relationship to Andrew was described in homoerotic imagery, drawing on Platonic tradition, Maximilla's conversion is described as a marital union.

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[137] Kenneth C. Wagener, "'Repentant Eve, Perfected Adam.' Conversion in *The Acts of Andrew*," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering Jr. (Atlanta, Gerogia: Scholars Press, 1991), 255.

[138] Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 49–50.

Maximilla as New Eve

The imagery of Maximilla's marital union with Christ is quite complex. Maximilla, too, represents something more than herself. In a long speech from prison, which is Andrew's last communication with Maximilla, he likens her to Eve, and compares himself to Adam. Bearing in mind that Aegeates is already likened to the devil and called a snake, the three main players in the love triangle thus reenact the primordial drama from the Garden of Eden.[139] Andrew explains to Maximilla that if she renounces Aegeates, she will amend the fall.

> I rightly see in you Eve repenting and in me Adam converting. For what she suffered through ignorance [ἔπαθεν ἀγνοοῦσα], you—whose soul I seek—must now redress through conversion. The very thing suffered by the mind [νοῦς ἔπατηεν] which was brought down with her and slipped away from itself, I make right with you, through your recognition [τῇ γνωριζούσῃ] that you are being raised up. You healed her deficiency by not experiencing the same passions [τὰ ὅμοια παθοῦσα], and I have perfected Adam's imperfection by fleeing to God for refuge. Where Eve disobeyed, you obeyed; what Adam agreed to, I flee from; the things that tripped them up, we have recognized [ἐγνωρίσαμεν]. For it is ordained that each person should correct his or her own fall. (*Acts Andr.* 37)

After a eulogy on "the nature being saved" (ὦ φύσις σωζομένη, 37), Andrew again addresses Maximilla with typological references to Adam and Eve:

> Just as Adam died in Eve through his complicity with her [συνθέμενος τῇ ἐκείνης ὁμιλίᾳ], so also now I live in you through your observing the commandment of the Lord and through your transporting yourself to a state worthy of your essence. Scorn Aegeates' threats, Maximilla. (*Acts Andr.* 39)

The language in the first passage particularly draws on suffering/feeling (πάσχω) and its antidote, understanding/recognition (γνωρίζω/γινώσκω). In Platonic fashion, salvation history is described as a recognition process. As is typical for Andrew's speeches, there is a tendency to verbosity, and it is hard to understand exactly how the fall is imagined and who is to blame. It seems to be Eve's lack of understanding and her suffering or feeling that brought down the mind (νοῦς). The mistake can be rectified if Maximilla understands, obeys and is ruled by reason rather than passion.

Kerstin Aspegren places the *Acts of Andrew* within the tradition that distributes responsibility for the fall equally between Adam and Eve. The parallel structure that mentions both Adam and Eve puts them on a par; likewise,

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[139] See Wagener, who also develops this typology. Wagener, "'Repentant Eve, Perfected Adam.' Conversion in *The Acts of Andrew*," 254.

both Andrew and Maximilla must atone, according to Aspegren.[140] It seems to me that Eve receives more of the blame than Adam. She gets more attention than him in the passage, her actions are mentioned first, and not all have a parallel in Adam's. Adam, too, is imperfect, and agrees. He is also a guilty accomplice but not, as I read this passage, the instigator of the crime.

Maximilla, in contrast to Eve, understands and does not experience passion, and Andrew, as opposed to Adam, takes refuge in God. The phrase συνθέμενος τῇ ἐκείνης ὁμιλίᾳ needs some further scrutiny. Ὁμιλία has a range of meanings, including "company," "communion," "sexual intercourse,"[141] and "speech, lecture."[142] What Adam agrees to is therefore unclear. It could be Eve's verbal attempt at persuasion or perhaps a sexual seduction. Whatever Adam did, the result was death, according to the passage. Life, on the other hand, is dependent on observing the commandments and living in a "state worthy of your essence." Does the *Acts of Andrew* preach that one should "undo the sin of Adam and Eve" by choosing celibacy, as Elaine Pagels claims?[143] Prieur and Klauck likewise suggest that the original sin was sexual intercourse and that sexual continence will overcome this sin.[144] Such an Encratite reading of the *Acts* is, in my view, complicated by the fact that only Maximilla is encouraged to refrain from sexual relations. I agree that the fall entails *carnal* knowledge, but I think we need to look closer at Eve's wrongdoing. What, exactly, is Eve's ὁμιλία?

If we keep in mind that Adam, Eve and the snake are typological figures corresponding to Andrew, Maximilla and Aegeates, we might understand the drama as follows: Aegeates, the snake, is making sexual advances towards Maximilla, the new Eve. By refusing them, Maximilla will somehow correct the fall. It seems resonable to assume that the original sin, then, also involved sexual advances from a snake. Such an understanding of the fall is similar to that found in the texts I discussed in Chapter Two and Three (4 Macc 18:7–8, 2. Cor 11:3, 1 Tim 2:14 and *Prot. Jas*. 13:5). These texts focus on Eve, rather than Adam, as the main perpetrator that caused the fall, and give subtle hints about a sexual encounter between Eve and the snake. The *Acts* does not use the verb to deceive/seduce (ἐξαπατάω) that is used in these

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140 Aspegren, *The Male Woman. A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*, 128. See also Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 206.

141 LSJ.

142 BDAG.

143 Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, 21.

144 Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 128; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 205.

texts but, as in 2 Cor 11:3, it uses the imagery of betrothal and wedding and thus operates with the distinction between licit and illicit sex. Justin Martyr, writing around the middle of the second century, also alludes to a sexual union between the snake and the primordial woman in the *Dialogue with Trypho*:

> He became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent [τὸν λόγον τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄφεως συλλαβοῦσα], brought forth disobedience and death [παρακοὴν και θάνατον ἔτεκε]. (*Dial.* 100)

In the *Dialogue*, as well as in the *Protevangelium of James*, it is the difference between Eve and Mary that is elaborated by means of this imagery. Whereas Eve brings about the fall through disobedience, Mary opens the way to salvation through obedience. In the *Acts of Andrew*, Mary is of no significance in the salvation history. As I have noted, Jesus' earthly life is never even alluded to. The apostle as divine mediator almost takes over the soteriological role of Christ. Maximilla, however, seems to take on a similar role to that of the virgin Mary in the aforementioned texts. Just like Mary, Maximilla can somehow correct Eve's sin by her actions.

The last reference to Genesis in Andrew's speech to Maximilla may be a further indication that the *Acts* is familiar with the tradition that Eve's sin was to have sex with the snake. Andrew admonishes her to keep herself "unsympathetic to the works of Cain":

> So from now on, keep yourself chaste and pure, holy, unsullied, unalloyed, unadulterated [ἀμοίχευτον], unassociated with anything foreign to us [ἀσυνδιάθετον ταῖς ὁμιλίαις τοῦ ἀλλοτρίου ἡμῶν], unbroken, undamaged, unweeping, unwounded, unvexed by storms, undivided, unfalling, unsympathetic to the works of Cain [ἀσυμπαθῆ τὰ τοῦ Κάιν ἔργα]. For if you do not give yourself up to their opposites, Maximilla, I will rest, even if I am forcibly unloosed from this life for your sake—that is, for my sake. (*Acts Andr.* 40)

In this passage, Maximilla is warned to keep herself chaste and to disassociate herself from the world. Again we encounter the word ὁμιλία. Here, too, it may very well mean sexual intercourse: to keep "unassociated with the sexual intercourse of those foreign to us." There are rabbinic and Gnostic traditions that Cain was the offspring Eve generated through her intercourse with Satan.[145] For example, in the *Gospel of Philip* it is claimed:

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[145] Boyarin, *Carnal Israel. Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, 80–83; Gerard P. Luttikhuizen,

> First adultery came into being, afterward murder. And he was begotten in adultery, for he was the child of the serpent. So he became a murderer, just like his father, and he killed his brother. Indeed every act of sexual intercourse which has occurred between those unlike one another is adultery.
>
> (*Gos. Phil.* 61:5–10)

The *Gospel of Philip* is probably somewhat later than the *Acts*.[146] What is interesting for our purposes is that in this passage from the *Gospel of Philip*, we find the idea that Cain, as the child of the devil, is illegitimate. Moreover, a negative moral character is attributed to any sexual intercourse with "those unlike one another." The reference to Cain in the *Acts of Andrew* ends a long list of vices and virtues that distinguishes the pure and the holy from those "foreign to us." In the *Acts of Andrew*, the "kindred" (συγγενής) are constructed as legitimate children of God the Father, while the non-believing group is constructed as bastards: Everyone who has the seal has Christ as a legitimate brother and is set apart from their bastard brothers (14); Stratocles' offspring is registered, like a legitimate child, with the kindred who have witnessed the birth (9). On the other hand, whoever is opposed to Andrew's message is kindred to the snake (ὄφεως συγγενής, 42).[147] Here, as in the *Gospel of Philip*, sexual contact between different kinds of people is connected with adultery (μοιχεία, 40).

The exhortation to Maximilla to keep herself "unsympathetic [ἀσυμπαθῆ] to the works of Cain" seems to be a warning about keeping herself sexually sealed off from anyone who is not a believer, that is, anyone who is not spiritually "kindred." If the logic is similar to that of the *Gospel of Philip*, it seems to go like this: Eve's illicit union with the snake generated Cain, who became a murderer and is hence the symbol of all evil. The potential offspring of a union between Maximilla and Aegeates is similarly illegitimate, because they are not "kindred." Hence, it is nothing to strive for, but should be avoided. In this section of the speech, Andrew twice refers to Aegeates

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"Gnostic Ideas about Eve's Children and the Salvation of Humanity," in *Eve's Children. The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 209; Birger Albert Pearson, "Cain and the Cainites," in *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, ed. Birger Albert Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 100.

146 The *Gospel of Philip* is difficult to date. Ehrman suggests the third century, Isenberg the second half of the third century. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost scriptures. Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38; Wesley Isenberg, W, "The Gospel of Philip," in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 141.

147 Bovon, "The Words of Life in the *Acts of Andrew*," 91.

as the son of the devil ("Aegeates' father, the devil," 40; "the seductions of Aegeates and the flatteries of the serpent, his father," 40), thus underlining the connection. By staying away from Aegeates, Maximilla may reverse the spiral of evil, murder and death that pertains to Cain, Aegeates and all the devil's sons—a spiral that was started by too much feeling on the part of Eve.

The language used to describe the abhorrence of intercourse in the *Acts* is strong: "Rescue me from Aegeates' filthy intercourse (τῆς μιαρᾶς μίξεως Αἰγεάτα, 14)," pleads Maximilla in her prayer. Later, Andrew prays for her that she may be protected from this "disgusting pollution" (τοῦ μιαροῦ τούτου μιάσματος, 16), and the narrator states that Maximilla "was repulsed by sex with Aegeates as a heinous and despicable act [τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν μῖξιν ὥς τι δεινὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν ἔργον, 21]." It should be noted that, in all these instances, it is not sex in general but, more specifically, sex between Maximilla and Aegeates that is described as disgusting and repulsive. After Andrew's death, Maximilla leaves Aegeates for good "because of his beastly soul [τὴν θηριώδη αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν] and lawless public life [πολιτείαν ἄνομον, 64]." The reason seems not to be the negative value of intercourse per se. Rather, it is Aegeates' despicable lifestyle and low-level soul that seem to be a problem, in other words; his materiality and his mortality. I contend that it is Maximilla and Aegeates' difference in soul that makes them incompatible as sexual partners. They are not kindred (συγγενής), and their lifestyles as well as their eternal fates are diametrically opposed. Since Maximilla is kindred to God and all believers, she has an enlightened soul, which is an eternal element within her. Thus, she is a completely different being from Aegeates. Aegeates has no soul, no godly eternal element, but is more like an animal. The ontological difference between the spouses, then, makes sex repulsive and polluting. If this is a tenable interpretation, it would follow that sex, in the ideology of this text, is despicable between a believer and a non-believer. The possibility remains that sex between two believers, two kindred, might be fully acceptable, or at least not ontologically problematic.

If Eve's wrongdoing was to be seduced by the snake, and Maximilla, as a new Eve, can undo it by abstaining from sexual relations with her husband, what then was Adam's wrongdoing, and how can Andrew amend it? Must he also refrain from sex? Perhaps what Andrew must resist is not the temptation to indulge in sexual intercourse but to choose life over a martyr's death. When Andrew urges Maximilla to resist her husband's threats, he knows he is risking his own life:

> Scorn Aegeates' threats, Maximilla … remain chaste. Let him not only avenge himself on me with the tortures of captivity, let him also throw me to the beasts, burn me with fire, and throw me off a cliff. So what? Let him

> destroy this body as he will, for it is only one body [ἑνὸς ὄντος τούτου τοῦ σώματος] and it is akin to him [συγγενοῦς ὄντος αὐτοῦ]. (*Acts Andr.* 39)

Andrew accepts, and even appreciates that Maximilla's "no" to Aegeates will result in torture and death for him. In the creation myth as well as the apocryphal tale, it is the woman who holds the key to life and death. Eve's seduction led to Adam's (and her own) death (Gen 3:3; 19). If Maximilla assents to resume marital relations with her husband, Andrew will live temporarily, but ultimately be destroyed and suffer eternal death. As he explains:

> If I am driven from here, perhaps I can help others of my kindred [ἑτέρους συγγενεῖς μου] because of you, but if you become won over by the seductions of Aegeates [ταῖς Αἰγεάτου ὁμιλίαις] and the flatteries of the serpent, his father [τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ὄφεως κολακείαις], so that you return to your former sexual acts, know this: I will be punished there because of you [ἴσθι με ἕνεκέν σου κολασθησόμενον], until you realize that I despised living this life because of an unworthy soul. (*Acts Andr.* 40)

While a martyrdom death may benefit fellow believers, a misconducted life will result in punishment after death. Andrew's insight is that the body and the flesh are infinitely less worth preserving than the eternal soul. In his speech from the cross, Andrew adresses what he calls "fondness for the flesh [ἡ πολλὴ φιλία ἡ πρὸς τὴν σάρκα]" (61). This is not engaging in sexual activity per se. Rather, it seems to mean the desire to live the earthly life, which he describes as "painful, vain, crazy, boastful, empty, perishable, transitory, the friend of pleasures, the slave of time" (57). In the narrative, Andrew is given many opportunities to choose life—Aegeates even offers to take him down from the cross to which he is tied. But Andrew has made his choice, and utters a final prayer before giving up his spirit:

> But you yourself, O Christ, you whom I desired, whom I loved, whom I know, whom I possess, whom I cherish, whose I am, receive me, so that by my departure to you, there may be a reunion of the many kindred [ἡ τῶν πολλῶν μου συγγενῶν σύνοδος], those who rest [ἀναπαυομένων] in your majesty. (*Acts Andr.* 63)

Only by the rejection of sexual relations can Maximilla assist Andrew in becoming perfect (τελειόω, 37; τέλειος, 41) and achieving rest (ἀνάπαυσις) through death. Andrew's death is described as an act of pure will. He prays to the Lord from the cross to grant him death and immediately thereafter passes away: "When he had said these things and further glorified the Lord, he handed over his spirit" (63).

Becoming Male, Becoming Words

In his final speech to Maximilla, Andrew refers to her as a man and appeals to her mind and her intellect (41). In juxtaposition to Maximilla (the man), there is Stratocles (the childbearer) and Andrew (the midwife). Is there a complete gender reversal in the *Acts of Andrew*, as for example MacDonald seems to think: "Perhaps here, more than in any other early Christian text, one finds a conscious articulation of gender transformation, one bordering on gender reversal."[148] It could be argued that Maximilla "becomes male" when she is transformed through Andrew's words. Kari Vogt described the "sex-change metaphor" as a spiritualization of the category of gender. In some early Christian texts, ascription of the category of gender "depends on spiritual progress and it has a decisive role in attaining salvation."[149] It is at the end of his long exhortation to Maximilla that Andrew finally appeals to her as a "man":

> Therefore I beg you, wise man [τοῦ φρονίμου ἀνδρὸς], that your clearsighted mind [εὔοψις νοῦς] stand firm. I beg you, mind unseen, that you may be protected. I entreat you, love Jesus. Do not be overcome by the inferior [τῷ χείρονι]. You, whom I entreat as a man [παρακαλῶ ἄνθρωπον], assist me in my becoming perfect [τέλειος γένωμαι]. Help me too, so that you may recognize your true nature [ἵνα γνωρίσῃς τὴν ἀληθῆ σου φύσιν]. (*Acts Andr.* 41)

Andrew's speech seems to be in contrast to what Aegeates has said to her on a previous occasion:

> "First give me your right hand," he told her. "I will kiss the woman I will call no longer 'wife' [γυναῖκα] but 'lady' [δέσποιναν] so that I may find relief in your chastity [σωφροσύνη] and love [φιλία] for me." (*Acts Andr.* 14)

Several scholars have pointed out that both Andrew and Aegeates try to elevate Maximilla, to promote her to a new position. What Aegeates appreciates in her are the wifely virtues of chastity and love, while Andrew seems to value her mind and intellect.[150] MacDonald claims that Maximilla represents a new understanding of σωφροσύνη where the virtue is defined as absolute continence rather than fidelity to a husband.[151] This heightened form of chastity, that gives no room for sex at all, makes Maximilla an honorary man.[152] Rather than juxtaposing these two ideals as "either—or," I would

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[148] MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 237. See also Rodman, "Who's on Third? Reading *Acts of Andrew* as a Rhetoric of Resistance," 36–37.

[149] Vogt, "'Becoming Male': A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor," 183.

[150] Rodman, "Who's on Third? Reading *Acts of Andrew* as a Rhetoric of Resistance," 38.

[151] MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 226.

[152] Aspegren, *The Male Woman. A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*, 126.

argue for a "both—and" perspective. In the same speech in which Maximilla is called "wise man," she is also firmly grounded as female through the image of marriage to Christ as well as her typological role as a second Eve.

It is clear that for Maximilla, conversion means displaying male features. As a proper man should, according to ancient protocols of masculinity, she acts with her rational mind and has control over her body. Maximilla's "becoming male" serves to effeminize and ridicule her husband Aegeates, who is protrayed as less than a woman in his rage, fear and sensuality.[153] But she does not become a perfect man in other respects. As I have noted earlier, she does not show domination over others except her slaves, nor does she speak outside the house. On the contrary, even after conversion she remains quiet and dutiful. She displays, however, a shift in allegiance from one husband to another. She goes from Aegeates authority to Christ's—that is, to Andrew's, who is Christ's earthly representative. Throughout the story she is obedient to Andrew's words, she is listening rather than speaking, and she seeks his advice. The praise that Aegeates utters for her chastity and love (14) is the praise Maximilla seeks from her inner husband. It is to Christ/Andrew that she now has pledged chastity and love. For example, Maximilla asks Andrew for advice when Aegeates has threatened to kill the apostle unless she returns to the marriage bed:

> At the usual time, Maximilla again went with Iphidama to Andrew. Putting his hands on her eyes and then bringing them to her mouth, she kissed them and began to seek his advice about every aspect of Aegeates' ultimatum.
>
> (*Acts Andr.* 37)

As a perfect female, with some admirable male traits, then, Maximilla is a paragon of chastity, silence and submission.

Maximilla's bedroom is a site of philosophical discourse rather than of sexual intercourse.[154] As a true philosopher, Andrew teaches all the brethren, the kindred, about the highest truth. Andrew Jacobs has claimed that this new kinship group, representing *syggeneia*, has replaced the upper-class conjugal family ideal of *koinonia*.[155] Plutarch was one of the representatives of this Roman elite conjugal ideal that understood marriage as a symbiosis

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[153] Moore and Anderson find a similar usage of the woman who can "take it like man" as a shaming device in 4 Maccabees. Moore and Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," 262.

[154] Schroeder, "The Erotic Asceticism of the *Passion of Andrew*: The Apocryphal *Acts of Andrew*, the Greek Novel and Platonic Philosophy," 52.

[155] Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," 37.

where the husband leads his wife into a state of higher morality.[156] It seems to me that rather than replacing Plutarch's ideal of matrimony as a philosopher's school with the notion of the *syggeneis*, both ideas exist side by side in the *Acts*. Philosophy and education are key words in this narrative, as they are in the "Advice to Bride and Groom."[157] In Maximilla's relationship with her true husband (Adam/Christ), Plutarch's vision about a "lifelong partnership" (βίου κοινωνίᾳ, *Conj. praec.* 138c) bound by philosophy is lived out. Thus, what Jacobs claim about the "Advice to Bride and Groom" is equally true of the *Acts of Andrew*:

> The husband's role as literal inseminator is replaced with a philosophical insemination, and the product of this intellectual reproduction is, somewhat paradoxically, the wife herself as newly reconstituted philosophical partner.[158]

In a way, Andrew sows seeds in Maximilla, too, although that image is not used in the narrative. Perhaps the reason for that is that this insemination is not fruitful in the same way that Stratocles' is. Nevertheless, Maximilla acts on Andrew's words, and she is somehow transformed by them. When Maximilla leaves the prison, Andrew's advice has moved her to change: "for when she heard the words that applied to her and in some way was changed by them, she became what the words signified [γενομένη τοῦτο ὅπερ οἱ λόγοι ἐδείκνυον]" (46).

Maximilla's transformation seems to be an embodiment rather than an articulation of her salvation. She must transform herself "to a state worthy of your essence [τὸ τῆς οὐσίας ἀξίωμα]" (39). In contrast to Stratocles, who gives birth to saving words and starts to speak them, Maximilla's becoming what the words signify is a *mute* act and must be displayed in her actions. Whereas Stratocles is urged in his childbearing process not to remain silent (μὴ ἠρεμεῖν, 7), Maximilla continues to lead a quiet life (βίον … ἤρεμον, 64) after the apostle's death. Rather than birthing her understanding in discourse, the words have to be transformed into something physical—they are, as it were, transcribed onto her chaste body. Klauck has argued that Maximilla's transformation into the words Andrew preaches is "an act of procreation."[159] But Maximilla's marriage to Christ is not fruitful in the way that Stratocles' childbearing is: While Maximilla becomes words, Stratocles

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156 Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," 29.

157 See e.g. *Conj. Praec.*, 146a.

158 Jacobs, "'Her Own Proper Kinship': Marriage, Class and Women in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," 29.

159 Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction*, 135.

generates words. In the course of the narrative, Stratocles goes through a transformation where he grows into the role as new leader of the community after Andrew's death. Maximilla continues her patronage role, but it is her continued bodily integrity that is emphasized: she continues to reject Aegeates' sexual invitations until he finally commits suicide.

In the passage quoted above, Maximilla is entreated as both man (ἀνήρ) and human being (ἄνθρωπος). Since the "becoming male" metaphor appears in close connection to the Genesis references, it has been asked whether the text conveys "the idea of a restoration of the pristine innocence and return to Paradise."[160] Does Maximilla overcome the primordial divide and restore the "androgynous image" in which God created humans (Gen 1:26–27)?[161] As I understand it, the *Acts of Andrew* is interested neither in eschatology nor in a cosmic restoration of the fall, but rather in the individual's conversion and salvation. That is why the passage ends with the exhortation that each should correct his or her own fall. The idea that salvation entails achieving understanding, *gnosis*, is important in the *Acts*. This is possible for all believers, male as well as female. Maximilla, although secured in her femininity through the imagery of marriage with Christ, is said to have a male understanding (*nous*). There is thus no ontological difference between male and female, as we saw in the Pastoral Epistles. Rather, a divide is drawn between believers, who have enlightened souls, and non-believers, whose existence is bodily.

Nevertheless, as I have shown in this chapter, there is a gender difference in how such an understanding should be embodied and articulated. Not only is there a gender difference, but class also plays a role in the embodiment of salvation. Iphidama, Maximilla's faithful slave, does not experience any transformation towards maleness, nor is she praised as a man. Thus, honorary masculinity seems to be an upper-class prerogative, just like sexual renunciation.[162] As I now move on to consider Euclia's role in the childbearing and soteriological economy of *Acts of Andrew*, these differences will be further elaborated.

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[160] Wagener, "'Repentant Eve, Perfected Adam.' Conversion in *The Acts of Andrew*," 354; Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 212. See also Rodman, "Who's on Third? Reading *Acts of Andrew* as a Rhetoric of Resistance," 41.

[161] Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Adrogyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13, no. 3 (1972): 185–189.

[162] A similar class and gender difference is at work in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, where the free, upper-class Perpetua, "becomes male," and the slave Felicitas does not. See discussion in Chapter Five.

The Wanton Slave Girl

The episodes evolving around Maximilla's "bed-trick" reveal some interesting intersections of gender and class. It is in chapters 17–22 that we read about Maximilla's use of Euclia as her surrogate body to avoid having sex with Aegeates. As noted earlier, Euclia is depicted as thoroughly evil and despicable. The destructive combination of deviant sexuality, greed, pride and hubris is contained within this character—she is a personified list of vices. What Euclia wants, according to the narrator, is to sleep with Aegeates (17) and she complies with Maximilla's plan for eight months (18). At this point, however, Euclia starts to misbehave: she asks to be freed and also asks for a large sum of money. Maximilla willingly grants her both her wishes, although there are hints that Euclia is undeserving. We learn that she regularly steals from her mistress (18).

Schwartz has argued that the time reference, "after eight months" (μηνῶν ὀκτώ, 18), is a textual hint that Euclia is pregnant.[163] According to Schwartz, a pregnant Euclia fits the narrative plot of the *Acts*: pregnancy is the most feared outcome of the adultery type scene. In this story it is, however, not the accused adulteress that becomes pregnant but her "evil twin:"

> The fact that Euclia demands her freedom as well as money, and that Maximilla gives it to her unbegrudgingly after eight months, offers a tantalizing clue to decoding the narrative's construction of sexuality.[164]

Schwartz wonders why the time reference is important enough to merit mentioning. Her answer is that pregnancy is the moment of truth which exposes the love triangle.[165] Further, Schwartz points out that the time frame of eight months functioned as a dividing line in antiquity for determining the legitimacy of offspring.[166]

Schwartz' interpretation of the phrase μηνῶν ὀκτώ seems plausible and opens up for an interesting additional level in my own reading for connections between childbearing and salvation. As I noted in Chapter Two, the

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[163] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 303–304. Rodman also hints at this possibility. Rodman, "Who's on Third? Reading *Acts of Andrew* as a Rhetoric of Resistance," 42.

[164] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 304.

[165] Schwartz, "From Bedroom to Courtroom: The Adultery Type-Scene in the *Acts of Andrew*," 303.

[166] Schwartz here refers to Hanson, "The Eight Months' Child and the Etiquette of Birth: Obsit Omen!," 589.

eighth month was considered a particularly dangerous time in the pregnancy, and it was thought that the child born in this month would not live. Writers such as Philo and Tertullian knew of this "medical truth" and employed it in their writings.[167] The reference to eight months in the *Acts of Andrew* may, then, not only allude to the possibility that Euclia was pregnant. It may also play on the ominous nature of such a pregnancy, and point forward to Euclia's horrible death. The fear that an eighth-month delivery would bring death to both mother and child resonates with the theme of sexuality and childbearing that occurs elsewhere in the *Acts*. In contrast to Stratocles' successful metaphorical pregnancy, where he gives birth to his mind-child, "saving words," Euclia's bodily pregnancy is brought to a tragic end when she is killed by Aegeates. Hence, Aegeates is deprived of both Platonic forms of immortality—immortality through offspring and immortality of soul. Maximilla not only denies Aegeates sexual intercourse but also offspring. In contrast, Euclia is "willing" to give him both sexual satisfaction and offspring, albeit only illegitimate. Euclia's offspring, a product of two people without a divine counterpart, would be strictly fleshly and therefore kindred to the devil. It would be doomed to eternal death, just like its parents, and is thus of no value, according to the logic of the text.[168]

The description of Euclia's torture and death is quite shocking to modern sensibilities, and perhaps that is why it has been passed over rather quickly by most interpreters.[169] Under torture (βασανίζομαι, 22) Euclia "admits" that she did it all for the money. The narrator betrays no sympathy for Euclia's fate:

> τὴν μὲν Εὐκλίαν ἐγλωσσοτόμησεν καὶ ἠκρωτηρίασεν κελεύσας αὐτὴν ἔξω ῥιφῆναι· ἥτις μετὰ ἡμέρας ἄτροφος μείνασά κυσὶν βορὰ ἐγένετο.

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[167] See discussion in Chapter Two. Philo claims that "the fruit of the womb is brought by nature to full ripeness in seven months, with a most strange result, namely that seven months' children come to the birth, whereas eight months' children [τῶν ὀκτομηνιαίων] as a rule fail to do so alive" (*Creation* 124 [Colson/Whitaker, LCL]).

[168] In Gregory's Epitome (GE), the later Latin rewriting of the lost beginning of the *Acts of Andrew*, there is an interesting story about the death of another baby who was unworthy of life because its parents were idolaters and fornicators, see GE 25.

[169] Prieur does not mention the fact that Euclia is killed in his summary of the contents of the *Acts*, nor does he comment on the episode of her torture and death elsewhere in his two-volume commentary and translation. In the translation he remarks in a footnote that there is a stark contrast between Aegeates' love for Maximilla and his cruel treatment of Euclia and the other slaves. Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 468. Euclia does not appear in the index of names and subjects in the book edited by Bremmer. See Jan N. Bremmer, *The Apocryphal Acts of Andrew* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

> [Aegeates] cut out Euclia's tongue, mutilated her, and ordered her thrown outside. She stayed there without food for several days before she became food for the dogs. (*Acts Andr.* 22)

Euclia's extreme punishment is fourfold: (1) her tongue is cut out, (2) her limbs are cut off and (3) she is cast outside and (4) eaten by dogs. At least two of these seem to have symbolic overtones. To have one's tongue cut out seems an appropriate, if cruel, punishment for a person who has spoken out of place.[170] After all, Maximilla paid her to "keep quiet" (σιγάω, 22). To be thrown to the dogs instead of receiving a proper burial is obviously degrading, and may similarly serve to put this slave back in her proper place.[171] In antiquity, the epithet "dog" was a common invective.[172] Dogs, in the Greco-Roman understanding, had voracious appetites, defiled what was holy, aroused fear and were shameless, since they "parade about naked, defecate, conduct sexual behavior and generally carry on without regard for human conventions of modesty and prudence."[173] Such behavior resembles the description of both Aegeates' and Euclia's behavior in the *Acts*. Euclia willingly reveals her intimate encounters with Aegeates to her fellow slaves, and Aegeates' bowel movements as well as his voracious appetite for food and sex are depicted in the narrative. Although all those who are "not kindred" resemble animals in their yearning for this-worldly pleasure (56), Aegeates and Euclia are the supreme examples of such a way of life. Hence, Euclia's death is a proper and fitting end for a slave woman who in life was "yapping" out of place and had sex in front of her fellow slaves.

In addition to the polluting and shameless qualities of the dog stereotype, it is also worth noting that human women and dogs have a special connection in Greek literature. In Homer, women are frequently compared to dogs "to denote shamelessness or audacity."[174] Semonides compares the female gossiper to a bitch in *Females of the Species*:

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[170] In 2 Macc 7:4, the spokesman of the Maccabean brothers is tortured and killed: "he [the king] commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the rest of the brothers and the mother looked on." See also 4 Macc 10:19: "See, here is my tongue; cut it off, for in spite of this you will not make our reason speechless."

[171] Note that being eaten by dogs was also the intended fate for Andrew. Aegeates orders him to be crucified but tied rather than nailed to the cross: "for Aegeates intended to torment him by his being hung and his being eaten by dogs if still alive at night" (54).

[172] Κύων, LSJ.

[173] Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Phillipians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?," *Biblical Interpretation*, no. 17 (2009): 458–459.

[174] Κύων, LSJ.

> Another he [god, at creation] made from a bitch, vicious, own daughter of her mother, who wants to hear everything and know everything. She peers everywhere and strays everywhere, always yapping … A man cannot stop her by threatening, nor by losing his temper and knocking out her teeth with a stone … but ceaselessly she keeps up a barking you can do nothing with.
>
> (*Females of the Species* 12–20)

Helen King has traced the woman—dog connection from Hesiod's creation myth to the Hippocratic Corpus and argues for an etymological connection between κύων (dog) and κύω (to conceive, become pregnant).[175] Dogs were thought to be profusely fertile and to bear children without pain.[176] Thus, Euclia's fate, being eaten by dogs, may also play on her resemblance to those animals as a "bitch," eager for intercourse and profusely fertile.

There may be several intertextual echoes in the story of Euclia. MacDonald interprets "this gruesome episode so uncharacteristic of early Christian narrative" from an intertextual perspective. In accordance with his hypothesis that the *Acts of Andrew* is a "Christianized" Homer, he connects it to a similar scene in the *Odyssey*:[177] "both mention fornicating and greedy domestics, tattling fellow servants, enraged masters, hangings, defacing and anthropophagous dogs."[178] It is plausible that the story of Odysseus' return and the slaughter of the misbehaving slaves in his household may have been heard in the story of Euclia. However, if we look at the story more closely, it is not that similar. The fornicating slave women are only hanged, while Melantho, who is a male slave and a goatherd, has his hands and feet cut off, and his intestines fed to dogs. It is not his tongue that is cut out, but his ears and nose.[179]

The slave-type of the "domestic enemy"[180] who is severely punished when discovered is, as noted, all too common in Greco-Roman literature.[181] Another story that may also be heard is the story of Jezebel from 1 and 2 Kings. Just as the *Acts* borrowed literary *topoi* and images from epics, novels, biographies and philosophical discourse, it also drew on the Hebrew Bible, as we have seen in the Adam-Eve typology.[182] The fate of Euclia

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175 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 24–26.

176 King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, 24.

177 MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 227–228.

178 MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer. The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew*, 228.

179 See *Odyssey*, book 22.

180 Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms."

181 Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 119–120.

182 Bolyki argues that the Hebrew Bible served as an "association base" for the *Acts of*

resembles the tragic end of Jezebel, the evil Asherah-worshipping queen of Israel. Jezebel, like Euclia, is mangled, cast outside and eaten by dogs.[183] Like Euclia, she has spoken and acted out out of place, when she conspired with her husband to kill Naboth for his property (1Kings 21). Both women are cast in the texts as evil "others." There are, of course, also differences. Jezebel is a powerful queen, whose father is a king and whose husband takes her advice. Jezebel is "other" primarily because she is foreign, i.e. due to her ethnicity, while it is her slave status that makes Euclia "other." Nevertheless, both characters are cast as deviant "others" who must pay with their lives for their transgressions. Moreover, in both narratives there is a connection between deviant sexuality and deviant worship/idolatry. The Jezebel figure also turns up in the New Testament, in Revelation.[184] The woman called Jezebel in Revelation is a false prophet cast in the form of Jezebel from the Books of Kings:

> But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead. (Rev 2:20–23a)

The image of Jezebel as an evil "other," doubly destructive through idolatry and fornication, may well have been a known type in which Euclia could be cast.

In conclusion, the narrative employs the character of Euclia as a "surrogate body" for Maximilla.[185] In the narrative, Euclia's body has no inherent value other than as a means for the mistress' purposes. According to the

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Andrew and even compares the triangle Maximilla-Andrew-Aegeates with Jezebel-Elijah-Ahab. He notes that the two female protagonists are characterized differently (one positively, the other negatively), but does not draw Euclia into his discussion. See Bolyki, "Triangles and What is Beyond Them. Literary, Historical and Theological Systems of Coordinates in the *Acts of Andrew*," 73.

[183] 2Kings 9:35–37: But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. When they came back and told him, he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, 'In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.'"

[184] See Gail Corrington Streete, *The Strange Woman. Power and Sex in the Bible* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 154. Note that also Jezebel's children in Rev 2:23 will die.

[185] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 22.

ideology of this text, how is a slave girl saved? Must she also become chaste? Considering the sexual use of slaves by slave-holders, sexual renunciation was not a plausible lifestyle for an enslaved woman.[186] Prieur asserts that the *Acts* is class egalitarian *and* liberating for women. Since he also understands it as Encratite, this would imply that slaves have to live chastely, or that all slaves are freed upon conversion (to avoid sexual abuse by their masters). Lehtipuu draws out the dilemma in clear terms: "If virginity and continence are preconditions for salvation, Maximilla clearly sacrifices her slave girl and denies her salvation."[187] Two slaves convert to Christianity in the *Acts*, one male (Alcman) and one female (Iphidama). Both are the favorite slaves of their masters, who also convert. They are not freed, and we are not told that they lived chastely, so perhaps this text is not as consistently Encratite as has been assumed. Rather, obedience to the master's will is what characterizes the Christian slave. Their auxiliary function in the story gives them no personality—obedience is their only trademark. A slave's salvation, whether male or female, apparently depends on the master's faith as well as on the slaves' submissive and obedient behavior. As Harrill has shown for the martyrdom stories, the *Acts of Andrew*, too, reinforces ancient ideologies of slavery, by stressing the "faithful slave's" obedience to the master's will.[188]

Conclusion

Childbearing discourse and salvation discourse intersect on at least two levels in this text. In the conversion story of Stratocles, childbearing is an image used to describe the transmission of words of salvation. In the case of Maximilla, the bodily reality of bearing children is part of the life style she has to leave behind for the sake of salvation. It is not only sex that is devalued, but also reproduction and childbearing. Thus, in the *Acts of Andrew* the image of childbearing is reclaimed as a soteriological metaphor in a situation where physical childbearing is devalued. Possibly there is also a third level, in which Euclia exemplifies the fate of the material, bodily and

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[186] See Carolyn Osiek, "Female Slaves, *Porneia* and the Limits of Obedience," in *Early Christian Families in Context*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003).

[187] Lehtipuu, "The Example of Thecla and the Example(s) of Paul: Disputing Women's Role in Early Christianity," 352.

[188] Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms," 253.

childbearing existence left behind by Maximilla. Her gruesome fate perhaps symbolizes the death and extinction that await those who are kindred to the devil rather than to Christ.

I have pointed to the differences in Andrew's salvation discourses to Stratocles on the one hand and Maximilla on the other. Stratocles gives birth to saving words that can save others as well. He has received the seeds of salvation (44), which he then can sow in others. Maximilla's only challenge is to "remain chaste" (39). A woman who has a body capable of childbearing, is not, however, able to share in the childbearing of the soul. Maximilla's salvation is totally dependent on her not having sexual relations with her husband, and through this renunciation undoing the misdeed of Eve. She "becomes male" through her chastity, at the same time as she remains female through her marriage to Christ, in the type of a second Eve.

The intersectional reading I have undertaken, paying attention to gender as well as class, has revealed that there are some gaps in the purportedly Encratite theology of the text. At closer inspection, it seems that sexual renunciation is necessary only in the case of Maximilla. Neither in the case of Stratocles nor of Andrew, the two believing men in the story, nor for the slaves, is chastity a concern. For the character of Andrew, as well as for Stratocles, the concern is to show their masculinity (i.e. their *sophrosyne* and *andreia*) through indifference to political power and possessions (Stratocles) and bravery in death (Andrew). The Eve/Maximilla—Adam/Andrew typology also reveals a gender differentiation in the stress on chastity. Maximilla should show *sophrosyne* through renunciation of sexual intercourse with Aegeates, while Andrew shows self-restraint and courage in defiance and willing acceptance of death, the lot of Adam. According to Prieur, Maximilla and Stratocles have the same role, as exemplary disciples. Maximilla is, he argues, "la figure même du disciple d'André."[189] As I have tried to show, gender makes a difference, both in relation to salvation and in the converts' relationship to the apostle.

Although Maximilla's conversion to Christianity necessitates sexual abstinence—at least from a spouse who is not her kindred—it seems to be unproblematic to exploit the body of a slave for sexual purposes. The *Acts of Andrew* values highly the upper-class woman in opposition to her husband, but condemns the slave in opposition to her mistress. According to Glancy, the ascetic practices of some early Christian groups reinscribed "the

[189] Prieur, *Acta Andreae*, 300.

place of the slave outside the circle of honorable persons."[190] The *Acts* also reveals the place of the slave in the soteriological economy. The soteriological economy of this text distributes different routes to salvation according to gender and class. Through this intersectional reading, a hierarchy of bodies has emerged: At the top are Andrew, the mediator of God's saving words, and Stratocles, who is also able to speak the words of salvation; on an intermediate level is Maximilla, who must become what the words signify through bodily chastity. At the bottom of the hierarchy are slaves such as Iphidama and Euclia, whose bodies may be used for the purpose of their owners' pursuit of salvation. Iphidama's and Alcman's salvation is secured only through their submissive slave behavior. Euclia's salvation is of no concern in the narrative: her death is not lamented, but serves as an instructive tale about a slave who wants too much.

Masculinity as a marker of salvation is also distributed unevenly among the characters. Both the upper-class man and the upper-class woman move towards maleness on the male-female continuum in their conversion. As male philosophers, Stratocles and Andrew are close to becoming perfect men, while Maximilla must balance her inner man and her outer woman. She deserves to be called a man, because of her high understanding, but is still, as a woman, co-responsible for correcting the fall of Eve through bodily practice. A slave's salvation does not depend on a rise in any hierarchy, either the male-female or the slave-free, but on remaining obedient and staying in one's place.

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[190] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 156.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE *MARTYRDOM OF PERPETUA AND FELICITAS*

Introduction

The two female martyrs we meet in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* are mothers. One of them, Felicitas, gives birth while they are in prison, the other, Perpetua, breastfeeds her infant son. Both women give up their children and thus their role as mothers in pursuit of a higher good: salvation through martyrdom.

The relationship between these two women will form an important part of my investigation. In the narration of Felicitas' delivery, connections are drawn between childbearing and martyrdom. This scene will serve as a starting point for my exploration of the interconnections between salvation and childbearing in the text. I am particularly interested in the correlation between salvation, martyrdom and motherhood.

Date, Place, Authorship, Genre

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* tells the story of the martyrdom of six Christians, two of whom are women—Perpetua and Felicitas. It is one of the earliest of the Martyrdom Acts, and became an archetype for later narratives in this tradition.[1] The narrative is usually dated to the reign of Septimius Severus (193–211), based on Tertullian's reference to Perpetua's vision of Paradise in *The Soul* 55.[2] Its provenance can be located to North Africa, probably in the vicinity of Carthage.[3] Thus, the *Martyrdom*, together

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[1] Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xxv.

[2] Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 1051–1052; Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas."; Jacqueline Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 20; Jakob Balling, Ulla Morre Bidstrup, and Torben Bramming, *De unge skal se syner. Perpetuamartyriet oversat og kommenteret* (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 1997), 57.

[3] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1051; Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes*, 22–23.

with Tertullian's writings, is among the earliest textual witnesses to a North African as well as a Latin-speaking Christianity.

In modern editions, Perpetua and Felicitas share the title of the story, but when it comes to the ancient manuscripts, the situation is less clear. Most title pages are missing, but in the ones that are extant it is in fact the male martyrs that are mentioned first.[4] However that may be, Perpetua is the real protagonist of the story, and most of the account is penned in her name. This "diary" is framed by an introduction and conclusion by an anonymous editor. The question of authorship is disputed. It has been common to assume—as many scholars still do—that a historical Perpetua stood behind the "diary notes."[5] The anonymous editor specifically claims that Perpetua wrote it in her own hand (*conscriptum manu sua*, 2.3),[6] and it is precisely this female authorship that accounts for the martyrdom's "claim to fame." There are very few texts preserved from Antiquity that are written by women,[7] and the martyrdom would be the earliest text written by a Christian woman.[8] Brent Shaw claims that Perpetua's writing style is typical of female writings, with "a penchant for a repetitive paratactical style which emphasizes the concrete and is more directly tied to the realities of actual face-to-face relationships than the abstractions and complexities of male literary production."[9] Thomas Heffernan has critiqued the authenticity of

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[4] Jan N. Bremmer, "The Motivation of Martyrs. Perpetua and the Palestinians," in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs. Festchrift für Hans G. Kippenberg zu seinem 65. geburtstag*, ed. Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 542.

[5] Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 57; Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*, 6; Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*; Balling, Bidstrup, and Bramming, *De unge skal se syner. Perpetuamartyriet oversat og kommenteret*, 55–56; Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," 836; Brent D. Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," *Past and Present* 139 (1993): 12.

[6] All quotations from the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, in English and Latin, are from "The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas."

[7] For an overview, see Plant's anthology, Plant, *Women Writers of Ancient Greece and Rome. An Anthology*. Perkins has claimed that the diary "preserves for us the clearest woman's voice (expect, perhaps, Sappho's) to speak from the ancient world." Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 104. Note, however, that she now doubts "the narrative's historical veracity," questioning both whether it was written by a woman *and* whether it narrates any historical events. Judith Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 324.

[8] Rader, "The *Martyrdom of Perpetua*. A Protest Account of Third-Century Christianity," 3.

[9] Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," 19–20. Rader also argues that the point of view is a woman's, because of the references to childbearing, nursing and regard for father and son:

the diary on philological grounds, arguing that these sections may better be understood as *hypomnemata*, "reconstructed from a verbal report, very possibly provided by Perpetua herself during the time of her imprisonment."[10] More recently, he has argued in favor of the authorship by Perpetua and Saturus of their respective narratives, which were "edited by a close contemporary."[11]

Ross Kraemer and Shira Lander have questioned Shaw's assumptions about a distinct female rhetoric, and argue that it is just as likely that the distinctive style was "purposefully constructed by an ancient author to appear as a (female) martyr's diary."[12] I agree with Kraemer and Lander that what we have in the text "is a 'representation' whose correspondence to actual persons and events cannot be determined."[13] Erin Ronsse persuasively argues that the text is put together deliberately and functions as a rhetorical whole in which prayer, vision, and prophecy on the one side complement debate, trial and rhetorical success on the other.[14] I likewise regard this text as a carefully redacted whole. The first-person sections function together with the frame narrative as a story conveying a meaningful interpretation of the experience of persecution and execution.[15]

Just as important as the story of the martyrs' imprisonment, trial and execution is the narration of Perpetua's and Saturus' visions. Descriptions of five different visions take up much of the space in the *Martyrdom*. In antiquity, dreams and the interpretation of dreams played an important

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"concerns generally identified as female in nature." Rader, "The *Martyrdom of Perpetua*. A Protest Account of Third-Century Christianity," 9.

[10] Thomas J. Heffernan, "Philology and Authorship in the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion* 50 (1995): 324.

[11] Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

[12] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1055.

[13] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1058. Similarly, Fatum calls the *Martyrdom* "en raffineret komposition" ("a refined composition"), Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 230. Perkins contends that the *Maryrdom*'s focus on maternity is a further argument for scepticism about its historical veracity: "Their depictions are so rhetorically pertinent to the discourse of the period in Carthage as evidenced by Tertullian as to make suspect the women's authenticity as real persons." Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 316.

[14] Erin Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 3 (2006): 294.

[15] For this view, see also Petersen, "Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," 251; Heffernan, "Philology and Authorship in the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," 323–324.

role.[16] There were differing theories about dreams and where they came from, but a common consensus that dreams were "vehicles of meaning,"[17] and that at least some of them were messages from the divine.[18] Great people had particularly significant dreams, and such dreams were considered a mark of their greatness.[19] Thus, dreams could and should be interpreted, e.g. through classification or allegory.[20]

What is the significance of Perpetua's visions? The introduction makes clear that dreams and visions are central to the narrative. The quotation from Joel 2:28–29/Acts 2:17–18 refers to sons and daughters prophesying, young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams (1.4), and is followed by the assertion that the narrator honors and acknowledges "not only new prophecies but new visions as well" (*sicut prophetias ita et uisiones*, 1.5). The text does not yield a neat taxonomy of different forms of "seeing." Rather, prophecies, visions and dreams are all mediations from God—they are gifts (*donatiua*, 1.5) of the Holy Spirit.[21] The visions are full of heavenly imagery and predict the martyrs' outcome: death and glorious afterlife. According to Elizabeth Castelli, the addition of a cosmic realm typifies the Christian interpretation of death in the arena.[22] In the *Martyrdom*, it is particularly the visions that help create this layer, and pit the worldly against the otherworldly. In the historic realm, there is the account of the catechumens' imprisonment, trial and execution. The visions add a cosmic level, which both interprets and predicts the outcome of the events in the historic realm. Thus the visions give insight into the divine will. The focus on visions and dreams is one of the reasons why some scholars connect the *Martyrdom* to Montanist Christianity.[23] Others argue that the traits in the *Martyrdom*

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[16] See William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009). I am grateful to Jorunn Økland, who suggested this line of inquiry to me.

[17] Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 51. I am grateful to Jorunn Økland, who suggested this line of inquiry to me.

[18] Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, 31–32.

[19] Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, 122.

[20] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, 74–105, esp. 91–92. For example, Artemidorus created a taxonomy of dreams in his *Oneirokritica*, in which he creates rules for decoding meaning, whereas Philo and Origen took dreams as an occasion for allegorical interpretation.

[21] Ronsse argues that Perpetua has visions rather than dreams. It is a mistaken assumption, according to her, that Perpetua relates sleeping dreams. Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," 308–310.

[22] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 56.

[23] Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Chris-*

that have been labelled Montanist are not *distinctive* of the New Prophecy, but are characteristic of African Christianity as a whole.[24] Kraemer and Lander also conclude "that the matter cannot be resolved with any certainty."[25] Whether Montanist or not, the story offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of early Christian martyrdom, and the class and gender negotiations connected to it.

Summary of the Story

The text can be divided into four main parts: an introduction by an anonymous narrator (1–2); a prison account written in the first person, attributed to Perpetua (3–10); a first-person account of a vision, attributed to Saturus (11–13); the narrator's account of Felicitas' delivery and of the martyrs' death in the arena (14–21). In the introduction, the martyrs are presented as Revocatus, Felicitas, Saturninus, Secundulus and Vibia Perpetua. Revocatus and Felicitas are slaves, Saturninus and Secundulus get no further designation, while Perpetua is presented as an upper-class matron. The first-person narrative by Perpetua starts with an argument she has with her father while they are in custody. She confesses to her father that she is a Christian, while he begs her to change her mind. Shortly after this incident, the Christian confessors are all baptized. When they are taken to the prison proper, they are first thrown into a section that is dark, hot and suffocating. But subsequently, after some fellow Christians bribe the guards, they are taken to a cooler and nicer place. Here Perpetua's baby is brought to her, and she is allowed to keep him with her in prison.

Perpetua's first vision occurs at this point. In it she is together with a sixth martyr, Saturus, who is here introduced for the first time. She sees an immense ladder with a dragon at its foot. Weapons are attached to the ladder, but Saturus courageously climbs it and urges Perpetua to do the same. In the name of Christ she does so, stepping on the dragon's head. At the top they enter a garden and are greeted by a shepherd milking sheep, who is surrounded by thousands of white-clad people. He feeds Perpetua a mouthful of milk or cheese, the crowd cries "amen" and she wakes up.

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tians in the Greco-Roman World, 159. For a recent study arguing that the *Martyrdom* is Montanist, see Rex D. Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions." Evidence of Montanism in The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

[24] Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion. The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman*, 156–158; Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," 834.

[25] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1061.

She immediately interprets this dream to mean that they are going to die as martyrs.

A few days later, they are brought before the tribunal. Despite her father's pleas to her, Perpetua confesses to being a Christian together with her companions, and they are condemned to fight the beasts. Her father decides that she may not keep her baby with her, but Perpetua discovers that she does not worry about her baby any more. Nor does she suffer from inflammation in the breasts from this abrupt end to breastfeeding.

The three next visions follow almost immediately after one another. The second and third visions are of Perpetua's deceased brother, the child Dinocrates. First she sees him in a dark and hot place. Thirsty and dirty, he is unable to reach over the rim of a pool containing fresh water. After days of praying for him, she has a subsequent vision in which Dinocrates is happy, clean and healthy, drinking from the pool and playing with the water. After a brief and final appearance by her father, Perpetua has her fourth and final vision. This depicts her in the arena, where she is to fight an ugly Egyptian gladiator. As her clothes are stripped off, she discovers herself to be a man. She seems to be a professional wrestler, with assistants who rub her with oil. A giant man holding a wand and a green branch with golden apples presides over the fight. He declares that if the Egyptian defeats Perpetua, he will slay her with the sword, but if she defeats the Egyptian, she will receive the golden branch. Perpetua overpowers the Egyptian with her blows and kicks. She wins, receives the branch and goes towards the Gate of Life.

The redactional material adds a fifth vision: Saturus'. In this vision Saturus and Perpetua are the main characters; they ascend, lifted by angels, and enter a garden. They see the Lord, who sits on a throne surrounded by angels and elders singing "Holy, holy, holy." The elders urge them to "go and play." Perpetua and Saturus agree that they have received their reward and are happier here than they ever were on earth. Outside in the garden they mediate between quarrelling priests, and finally recognize "many of our brethren, martyrs among them."

After Saturus' vision, the narrator recounts how Felicitas gives birth in prison. She is eight months pregnant and fears that she will not be allowed to fight the beasts with her comrades. Two days before the fight, her friends pray for her and she immediately goes into labor. She gives birth to a girl, who is handed over to "one of the sisters."

Finally, the martyrs' arena fight is recounted, with special attention given to the two women. They are stripped naked and sent into the stadium to fight a heifer, but the audience is appalled by the sight of the naked women and so they are called back and dressed in tunics. A second encounter with

the cow leaves them hurt but not dead. All the martyrs are then brought into the arena together. They kiss each other with the kiss of peace and are executed by the sword, Perpetua last of all.

Felicitas in Labor

Compared to Perpetua, Felicitas is a minor figure in the narrative. She is simply introduced as Revocatus' fellow slave, *conserua*, and mentioned after him in the list of catechumens who were arrested (2.1). It has been assumed that she was Perpetua's slave, but the text does not contain any information about Felicitas' owner.[26] After this brief introduction, Felicitas does not appear again in the narrative until chapter 15, with the account of her delivery. She makes a third, brief appearance when she fights with Perpetua in the arena (18.3; 20.1–6). Felicitas' childbearing scene serves as a good starting point for this investigation. In my view, this short passage connects ideas about gender, slavery, suffering and salvation in a fascinating way.

The story of Felicitas' childbearing is framed as an answer to prayer and a favor granted by God (*gratia domini*, 15:1) to Felicitas. As the day of the games, the *munus*, draws near, Felicitas and her co-martyrs are worried that she will not be allowed to fight with the others because she is pregnant: "for it is against the law for women with child to be executed. Thus she might have to shed her holy, innocent blood afterwards along with others who were common criminals" (15.2). So the group prays for her and she immediately goes into labor:

> *Statim post orationem dolores inuaserunt. et cum pro naturali difficultate octaui mensis in partu laborans doleret, ait illi quidam ex ministris cataractariorum: Quae sic modo doles, quid facies obiecta bestiis, quas contempsisti cum sacrificare noluisti? et illa respondit: Modo ego patior quod patior; illic autem alius erit in me qui patietur pro me, quia et ego pro illo passura sum.*
>
> And immediately after their prayer the birth pains came upon her. She suffered a great deal in her labour because of the natural difficulty of an eight months' delivery. Hence one of the assistants of the prison guards said to her: "You suffer so much now—what will you do when you are tossed to the beasts? Little did you think of them when you refused to sacrifice?"

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[26] Musurillo claims that Felicitas was Perpetua's "personal slave-girl." Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, xxvi. See also Trevett, who argues that she was "probably Perpetua's slave," but that the term *conserua* did not necessarily indicate servile status, since it was also a metaphorical term for "fellow Christian." Trevett, *Montanism. Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*, 181.

> "What I am suffering now," she replied, "I am suffering by myself. But then another will be inside me who will suffer for me, just as I shall be suffering for him." (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 15.5–6)

In the midst of her childbearing struggle, Felicitas is chastised by the guard, who blames her for not having sacrificed to the emperor. The pain she is experiencing now is only a fore-taste of what she will suffer in the arena, he warns her. Felicitas' answer to the guard is the only direct speech by her in the *Martyrdom*. She insists that the pain in her martyrdom suffering will be assuaged by Christ, who will be inside her and suffer together with her. What is interesting, however, is that both the soldier and Felicitas connect suffering in childbirth and suffering in martyrdom.

Just as the delivery scene points towards death in the arena, the description of Felicitas in the arena refers back to her delivery:

> *Item Felicitas, saluam se peperisse gaudens ut ad bestias pugnaret, a sanguine ad sanguinem, ab obstetrice ad retiarium, lotura post partum baptismo secundo*.
>
> With them also was Felicitas, glad that she had safely given birth, so that now she could fight the beasts, going from one bloodbath to another, from the midwife to the gladiator, ready to wash after childbirth in a second baptism. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 18.3)

Here too, the narrator underscores the close connection between the two forms of bloodbath and bodily suffering: from giving birth to fighting beasts. Having established the link between these two scenes, let us look more closely at the labor scene.

When Felicitas gives birth, the terrible physical pain is in the foreground. This is typical of accounts of deliveries from antiquity. The narrator, the guard, and Felicitas all stress the pain, using three different verbs: *labor*, *doleo* and *patior*. Passive suffering and endurance were considered to be womanish and slavish qualities. They were considered morally bad, as opposed to the free male's morally good action, aggression, and ability to inflict pain.[27]

Twice we are told that Felicitas was in the eighth month of pregnancy (15.2; 5). As noted in Chapter Two, the eighth month was considered to be a very dangerous time to give birth. Parturition was thought to be especially

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[27] Brent D. Shaw, "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 3 (1996): 279. See also Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan, "Introduction: Differential Equations," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture. Differential Equations*, ed. Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998).

painful at this time, and the expected outcome of such a birth was the death of both mother and child. In Felicitas' case, it is her highest wish that she will be able to fight together with her Christian friends, and so Felicitas' successful delivery is depicted as an answer to her friends' prayer. The claim that she was in the eighth month hence underscores the terrible pain, and also makes the safe delivery a happy surprise. That she should survive such a precarious birth thwarts the cultural expectations that an eight months' delivery would go wrong, and thus renders the result of her friends' prayers all the more miraculous.[28]

Felicitas' childbearing diverges significantly from the typical setup of the birthing room as discussed in Chapter Two. First, Felicitas is portrayed as giving birth without helpers. No one seems to assist Felicitas as she struggles in labor. Her Christian friends have helped in bringing the contractions on through their prayer but as she goes into labor, only the prison guard is explicitly present. When they later march into the arena the narrator comments that Felicitas has gone "from the midwife to the gladiator" (*ab obstretice ad retiarium*, 18.3), thus rhetorically introducing a helper after the fact. This phrase seems to be word-play referring to the *retiarius*' role as birth-helper into afterlife, rather than an indication that there was a midwife present to help Felicitas. Perpetua, perhaps most strikingly, is absent from the childbearing scene. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald assume that "in reality Felicitas was probably assisted in labor by her companions."[29] Even if that were so: why are they not present in the text? The text does not seem to be interested in the relationship between the two women. Felicitas is never mentioned in the "diary" part of the *Martyrdom*,[30] and Perpetua is absent from the narration of Felicitas' delivery. One of the things

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[28] Tertullian gives voice to the ancient notion of the eighth month's child in *The Soul*. Here he uses the numbers seven and ten to make a theological point: "A mature and regular birth takes place, as a general rule, at the commencement of the tenth month … But inasmuch as birth is also completed with the seventh month, I more readily recognize in this number than in the eighth the honour of a numerical agreement with the sabbatical period; so that the month in which God's image is sometimes produced in a human birth, shall in its number tally with the day on which God's creation was completed and hallowed. Human nativity has sometimes been allowed to be premature, and yet to occur in fit and perfect accordance with an *hebdomad* or sevenfold number, as an auspice of our resurrection, and rest, and kingdom. The *ogdoad*, or eightfold number, therefore, is not concerned in our formation; for in the time it represents there will be no more marriage." (*The Soul*, 37, emphases in the English translation.)

[29] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 60.

[30] Marshall, "Postcolonialism and the Practice of History," 101.

that characterizes Felicitas, and also contrasts her with Perpetua, is her loneliness. To give birth alone was probably not so unusual for slaves and women of the lower classes. Only those with a wealthy husband or master could expect what Soranus demanded of the birthing room: three female helpers in addition to the midwife. Felicitas' lonely delivery thus reflects her position as a slave.[31]

The second unusual aspect is that Felicitas is not shielded from the male gaze, as was common in order to preserve the modesty of a woman in labor. The birthing room of a free woman was a closely guarded space, where access was restricted also to ensure the legitimacy of the child.[32] As Felicitas gives birth on the floor of a prison cell, she is being watched by a male guard. She is exposed—a body without dignity. Again, this feature may be explained by her slave status. Glancy has argued that slaves were perceived as "bodies," that is, objects without dignity, and therefore they were vulnerable to abuse and penetration.[33]

These observations about Felicitas' delivery and martyrdom raise some questions for further investigations: Why is a female slave in labor used as a "site" to extrapolate the idea of suffering in martyrdom? Is Perpetua similarly described? Why is martyrdom sought, in this text, at the expense of motherhood? Before we look at the constructions of gender and class in the characters of Perpetua and Felicitas, it is necessary to determine more closely the significance of salvation in this story, and its relation to martyrdom.

Martyrdom as Salvation

In the context of local and sporadic (and at a later stage, empire-wide) persecution,[34] early Christians started to retell and reframe the stories of torture and death as victorious tales. Castelli understands the production of martyrdom narratives as an attempt "to subvert the meanings imposed

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[31] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 61.

[32] Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 100.

[33] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 10–12.

[34] For an overview of early Christian persecution and martyrdom, see W.E.C. Frend, "Martyrdom and Political Opression," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000). According to Frend, only with Decius (249 CE) do we "enter a period of state-sponsored persecution." Up until this time, persecution was local and stirred by the people, not the government. Frend, "Martyrdom and Political Opression," 824, 27.

by the physical arrangements of the arena."[35] The martyrdom acts were key documents in this attempt to subvert the meaning of death in the arena from "shaming, humiliating and public executions into public enactments of Christians' positions and beliefs."[36]

The belief in eternal life was an important component in the martyrological re-interpretations of death in the arena. The earliest preserved martyrdom account, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, gives voice to the belief that as the athlete who won the contest was crowned with a garland, the martyr would be crowned with the "garland of immortality" (17). Martyrdom was seen as "a shortcut to immortality."[37] In the "inverted logic of martyrdom,"[38] death is life; suffering is salvation. As Ignatius writes in his *Letter to the Romans*: "Grant this to me, brothers: do not keep me from living, do not wish me to die; do not hand over to the world the one who belongs to God" (Ign. *Rom.* 6.2). The same inversion of life and death takes place in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. When Perpetua dreams that she enters the Gate of Life (*porta sanauiuaria*, 10.13), through which surviving gladiators exited after a fight, she predicts that she will die. In the following I will look more closely at some of the positions and beliefs concerning salvation and eternal life in the *Martyrdom*.

Salvation Guaranteed

Through the reinterpretation of suffering as salvation, death became "the desired outcome and indeed the principal aim of the whole performance."[39] Perpetua's first vision is God's answer to her request about what is going to happen to them. When she wakes up she realises that they are going to die—she should not have any hopes in this age (*nullam iam spem in saeculo*, 4.10). Perpetua also interprets her final vision, wherein she fights the Egyptian, as a sign that she will fight the devil and win (10.14), that is, she will die and thus receive eternal life. In fact, all the visions have an element of transition of into God's realm: Perpetua and Saturus climbing the ladder and entering heaven; Dinocrates first struggling to drink, then playing with the water, happily refreshed; Perpetua and Saturus in front of the heavenly throne. Even the arena vision ends with Perpetua entering the Gate of Life.

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35 Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 120.

36 Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 323.

37 Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death. Suicide and Martyrdom Among Jews and Christians in the Ancient World* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 129.

38 Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 91.

39 Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 48.

The visions thus underscore that God is in control of events and that the outcome will be happy. Happiness in the afterlife is God's promise to the martyrs, as Saturus exclaims in his vision when he enters heaven: "This is what the Lord promised us. We have received his promise" (11.4). Through their deaths the martyrs will go to heaven: their salvation is assured.

The day chosen for their fight—the martyrs' "day of victory" (*dies victoriae illorum*, 18.1)—is the Emperor's birthday (16.3). It was a common feature in Christian martyrdom discourse to call a martyr's day of death her or his birthday, *dies natalis*, as it was the day on which the martyr was born into eternal life.[40] The term is not used in the *Martyrdom*, but the reference to Caesar's birthday, as well as the description of Felicitas' delivery, may play on this notion. Their martyrdom is, however, called a second baptism. First, in a reference to Felicitas, who is "ready to wash in a second baptism" (*lotura post partum baptismo secundo*, 18.3), and second, in a passage describing Saturus' particularly bloody arena fight:

> As he came away the mob roared in witness to his second baptism: 'Well washed! Well washed!' [*saluum lotum*] For well washed indeed was one who had been bathed in this manner. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 21.2–3)

The understanding that sins are washed away in baptism is transferred to martyrdom in the notion of a 'second baptism' where water is substituted for blood.[41]

The *Martyrdom* thus underscores in many ways that martyrdom gains a person salvation in the meaning of eternal life. Although all believers hold the hope of eternal life, the *certainty* that one is heaven-bound belongs only to the martyrs. Tertullian, too, believes that the salvation of confessors is assured. In *To the Martyrs*, he likens martyrdom to athletic contest and warfare; a struggle, but with a wonderful prize: "the prize is an eternal crown of angelic essence, citizenship in the heavens, glory everlasting" (*Mart.*, 3). He encourages everybody to "suffer for the truth, that we might be saved," (*Mart.*, 5).

The visions of Perpetua and Saturus not only predict the outcome, but by drawing up vivid images of the prize, the heavenly reward, they make martyrdom the *desired* outcome as well. Samuel Rubenson has pointed out that

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[40] Balling, Bidstrup, and Bramming, *De unge skal se syner. Perpetuamartyriet oversat og kommenteret*, 78. The *Martyrdom* was later read as a commemoration on the anniversary of the alleged day of their deaths, March 7.

[41] Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes*, 251. Tertullian also refers to martyrdom as a baptism of blood, see *On baptism*, 16.1.

the descriptions of heaven in the martyrdom acts are more concrete than those of the saints' lives. In contrast to the saints' *vitae*, which tell stories about holy men and women who are trying to live the life of paradise in the here and now, the martyrdom stories have to make up for the suffering in this world by the bliss in the next.[42] "Thanks be to God that I am happier here than I was in the flesh," exlaims Perpetua in Saturus' vision (12.7), thus underscoring how happy they are in the afterlife. The narrative also hints at another possible outcome after death. Perpetua sees her dead brother suffering (*laborare*, 7.9). There is, then, a dark and hot space where unsaved souls dwell. Moreover, the martyrs warn their adversaries about God's judgment (*iudicium dei*, 17.1), first to the onlookers as they enjoy their last meal ("take careful note of what we look like so that you will recognize us on the day," 17.2), and later to Hilarianus the Governor ("You have condemned us, but God will condemn you," 18.9).

In the visions we get a glimpse of how the heavenly afterlife is imagined. There is a garden (*spatium immensum horti*, 4.8; *uiridiarium*, 11.7; 13.5) where the Christian martyrs go. It is is above the earth, in the sky, and is accessed by climbing a ladder (4.3–7) or by being carried by winged angels. Resurrection seems to be immediate, since the martyrs ascend as soon as they have died, and they meet fellow believers in heaven (4:5–6; 11:2; 13.1–7). Tertullian, on the contrary, claimed that there was a difference between martyrs and ordinary believers concerning immediate resurrection. He held that since martyrs die "in Christ" rather than "in Adam," they go immediately to heaven when they die, as opposed to other believers, who lie in the ground until Jesus' second coming (*The Soul*, 55). To corroborate his claim, he refers to Perpetua:

> How is it, then, that the region of Paradise … displays no other souls as in it besides the souls of the martyrs? How is it that the most heroic martyr Perpetua on the day of her passion saw only her fellow-martyrs there, in the revelation which she received of Paradise, if it were not that the sword which guarded the entrance permitted none to go in thereat, except those who had died in Christ and not in Adam? (*The Soul*, 55.4)

In Perpetua's vision of heaven, she sees "thousands of people clad in white garments" (*candidati milia multa*, 4.8), but says nothing about whether they are martyrs or not. Tertullian probably refers to Saturus' vision, wherein he

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[42] Samuel Rubenson, "Kroppens uppståndelse i martyrakter och helgonbiografier," in *Kropp og oppstandelse*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus (Oslo: Pax, 2001), 145–148.

sees "many of our brethren, martyrs among them" (*multos fratres cognoscere sed et martyras*, 13.8). However, it is not claimed that all these people are martyrs, only some of them. It could be that Tertullian knew another version of the text.[43] It could also be a strategic reshaping of Perpetua's vision on his part. By claiming that Perpetua saw only martyrs in heaven, Tertullian had the support of a popular heroine for his doctrine on martyrs' immediate ascent to heaven. The *Martyrdom*'s soteriology, then, may be simpler than Tertullian's, and may not distinguish between martyrs and others who die in the faith—both groups may go straight to heaven. The immediate transfer of Dinocrates from a place of suffering to a place of bliss supports such a reading.

In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* resurrection seems to be bodily, yet not fleshly. Saturus' vision starts with the statement: "We had died, and had put off the flesh" (*passi eramus, et exiuimus de carne*, 11.2). It ends on the same note, as Perpetua exclaims that she is happier now than she was in the flesh (*quomodo in carne hilaris fui, hilarior sim et hic modo*, 12.7). Nevertheless, the population of heaven seem to have bodies capable of wearing robes, of singing and of cupping hands to receive nourishment. Here, too, there may be a divergence from Tertullian's soteriology, which strongly stresses the resurrection of the flesh.[44]

Defeating the Devil

The victory won in martyrdom is seen as a victory over the devil. After Perpetua wakes up from her final vision, in which she has fought an Egyptian gladiator, she interprets its meaning: "I realized that I would fight with the Devil, but I knew that I would win the victory" (10.14). The trials that the martyrs go through are understood as contestations with the devil. Not only the Egyptian, but also the dragon in the first vision and Perpetua's father have diabolic traits.[45] This cosmic layer in the story carries echoes of Gen 2–3. Perpetua's visionary and arena fights resemble Eve's struggle with the snake in the Garden of Eden. In Perpetua's first vision, she encounters a *draco* (4.4; 6). Although Musurillo translates *draco* as "dragon," its main

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[43] Peter Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter, oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum. Ein Versuch zur Passio sanctarum Perpetua et Felicitatis*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2004), 272–273.

[44] See particularly the treatise *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, but also *The Soul*.

[45] Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter, oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum. Ein Versuch zur Passio sanctarum Perpetua et Felicitatis*, 184–185.

meaning is "snake,"[46] It is waiting under the ladder which reaches into heaven, ready to attack anyone who dares to try to climb it. Perpetua steps on its head in the name of Christ and succeeds in climbing the ladder (4.6–7). In the final vision, she strikes the head of the Egyptian with her feet and steps on his head as he falls flat on his face (10.11). As she enters the arena, this image is invoked again by the narrator who comments: "Perpetua began to sing a psalm: she was already treading on the head of the Egyptian" (18.7). The continuous contestation between the devil and humankind is predicted in Gen 3:15, "he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." In Perpetua's case, this struggle is victorious, and so she can be seen as a kind of new Eve—a promise of resurrection.[47] After fighting the Egyptian gladiator, Perpetua receives a branch with golden apples (10.8; 13). The apples are reminiscent of the immortality-giving golden apples in Greek mythology, but perhaps also of the fruit of the tree of life from the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9).[48] They symbolize her victory, her immortality. The Egyptian's behavior in the vision, rolling in the dust before the match, perhaps recalls the prediction in Genesis that the serpent shall crawl upon his belly and eat dust (Gen 3:14). In *The Shows* Tertullian calls wrestling the devil's game, and draws parallels to the Garden of Eden:

> And the wrestler's art is a devil's thing. The devil wrestled with, and crushed to death, the first human beings. Its very attitude has power in it of the serpent kind, firm to hold—tortures to clasp—slippery to glide away.
>
> (*The Shows*, 18.3)

As the devil wrestled with and caused the death of the first humans, so has Perpetua wrestled with and defeated the devil in her ordeal.

Finally, the labor of Felicitas, underscoring her pain and suffering, echoes the punishment dealt out to Eve, of pain in childbirth (Gen 3:16). That God has enforced the necessity of such suffering as a punishment for Eve's transgression, may be the reason why Felicitas does not invoke Christ as her co-sufferer in labor, but only in martyrdom (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 15.6). Yet Felicitas proceeds from the suffering of childbirth to the suffering of martyrdom. Both women thus overcome the devil as they are successful in their *sufferentia carnis*, their perseverance of the flesh (3.5).

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[46] OLD.

[47] Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter, oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum. Ein Versuch zur Passio sanctarum Perpetua et Felicitatis*, 185.

[48] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, 164.

The Blood of the Martyrs: Sacrifice and Seed

The martyrs' likeness to Christ was part of the Christian interpretation of martyrdom.[49] When Perpetua and her friends are scourged, they rejoice because they have "obtained a share in the Lord's suffering" (18.9). Felicitas, too, draws a connection between her own suffering and Christ's (15.6). Jesus' death is depicted in the gospels as a voluntary sacrifice.[50] Drawing on this depiction, early Christian martyrdom narratives presented martyrs as imitators of Christ.[51] The purpose of telling the martyrdom narrative is, according to the redactor of the *Martyrdom*, that believers "may have fellowship with the holy martyrs and, through them, with the Lord Christ Jesus" (1.6). The position of the confessor—poised between life and death, and with the fulfilment of the heavenly promise close at hand—made him or her an intermediary between God and the Christian community.

As an intermediary, she can also intercede on behalf of the living and the dead.[52] Perpetua can pray for her dead brother and thus better his outcome in the afterlife. Moreover, the witness of the martyrs also gains new believers, according to the narrative. Death in the arena was a spectacular event that drew crowds: "no early martyr was taken aside discreetly and executed out of sight, just as no interrogation was conducted in small towns."[53] The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* recounts that many were converted during the course of the imprisonment, the adjutant of the jail among them (16.4; 17.3). The value of martyrdom is, thus, not least that it has a generative power—it produces new believers. As Tertullian explains, the blood of the martyr is like seed:

> The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; *the blood of Christians is seed* … For who that contemplates it, is not excited to inquire what is at the bottom of it? Who, after inquiry, does not embrace our

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[49] Candida Moss, *The Other Christs. Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 46–73.

[50] Droge and Tabor, *A Noble Death. Suicide and Martyrdom Among Jews and Christians in the Ancient World*, 131. For martyrdom as sacrifice, see also Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 50–68.

[51] Droge and Tabor, *A Noble Death. Suicide and Martyrdom Among Jews and Christians in the Ancient World*, 131. See also Moss, *The Other Christs. Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*.

[52] Gail Corrington Streete, "Buying the Stairway to Heaven: Perpetua and Thecla as Early Christian Heroines," in *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 191.

[53] G.W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 50.

> doctrines? And when he has embraced them, desires not to suffer that he may become partaker of the fullness of God's grace, that he may obtain from God complete forgiveness, by giving in exchange his blood? For that secures the remission of all offences. On this account it is that we return thanks on the very spot for your sentences. As the divine and human are ever opposed to each other, *when we are condemned by you, we are acquitted by the Highest*.
> (*Apology* 50.13–16, emphases added)

Tertullian calls the blood of the martyrs "seed" (*semen*). This blood/semen generates new believers, and is thus salvific not only for the martyrs but also for those who are convinced of Christianity's truth by the experience of the martyrs' bravery. Justin claimed that he had himself converted after witnessing how the Christians were fearless of death (*Second Apology*, 12.1). A similar notion of the generative effect of the spectacle of martyrdom, and by extension also of the narrative of martyrdom, is expressed in the *Martyrdom*, particularly in the introduction and conclusion (1.1; 20.10; 21.11).

Constructions of Gender and Class

The narrative representations of Perpetua and Felicitas are the focal points of this section. Perpetua is depicted as a good mother with genuine concern for her baby, but she also has masculine traits. Is she first and foremost a mother? Or is she depicted as "becoming male"? Felicitas is less significant in the story, and has also received less attention by interpreters. But a comparison of the way the two are represented is crucial to understanding the gender and class ideologies of this narrative.

Matron, Mother, Martyr

Apart from Perpetua, the narrator introduces the group of confessors quite economically (2.1). Perpetua, however, is mentioned last and given the following description:

> *Inter hos et Vibia Perpetua, honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta, habens patrem et matrem et fratres duos, alterum aeque cathecumenum, et filium infantem ad ubera. Erat autem ipsa circiter annorum uiginti duo*.
>
> And with them Vibia Perpetua, a newly married woman of good family and upbringing. Her mother and father were still alive and one of her two brothers was a catechumen like herself. She was about twenty-two years old and had an infant son at the breast. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 2.1–3)

In this description, Perpetua is introduced as an upper-class Roman *matrona*. The claim that she was *honeste nata* indicates that her family

belonged to the provincial nobility and were counted among the *honestiores*. According to Shaw, Vibius is a well-attested family name in North Africa and indicates that Perpetua's family held Roman citizenship and probably belonged to the decurial class of the town of Thuburbo Minus.[54] Disregarding any claims about historical veracity, on the level of the text this information about Perpetua's family name firmly establishes her as an upper-class woman. The claim that she was *liberaliter instituta* implies that she had received the education expected of women of her class. Upper-class Roman women could be well educated, although little is known of the details of women's education.[55] Jaqueline Amat suggests that their studies may have included music, reading and Greek.[56] Perhaps in order to corroborate such a claim, Perpetua is depicted as speaking Greek in Saturus' vision (13.4). Further, the narrator suggests that she was capable of writing, as the main body of the text is presented as her prison diary (*conscriptum manu sua*, 2.3).

Perpetua is a married woman. The phrase *matronaliter nupta* not only asserts married status but probably stresses that she is legitimately and respectably married and has the status of *matrona*. She is also called *domina* by both her brother and her father (4.1; 5.5), which may indicate that she should be understood as the mistress of her own household; at least it indicates power and status.[57] Why such an elaborate introduction? The introduction seems to establish Perpetua as an upper-class woman from the outset. Amat suggests that the description of Vibia Perpetua reads like an epitaph, and therefore bestows honor on her as an epitaph would.[58]

Perpetua's family plays a central role in the *Martyrdom*.[59] Early in the narrative, her father is a very important figure, and their relationship will be discussed below. Perpetua's love and concern for her son is another

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[54] Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," 10–11. Interestingly, in the third century, *honestiores* were not convicted *ad bestias*, as Perpetua is, but were beheaded by the sword. See Thomas Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London: Routledge, 1992), 69. After having fought the beasts, all the martyrs are beheaded by sword (21.8–9). With regard to judicial penalties, the *Martyrdom* does not seem to differentiate between *honestiores* and *humiliores*.

[55] Rawson, "The Roman Family," 40.

[56] Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes*, 193.

[57] *Domina*: "A female head of household, mistress, owner," OLD.

[58] Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes*, 193.

[59] The families of the martyrs are usually not important in the Christian martyrdom narratives. Bremmer notes that the martyrdom sources usually lack information about most aspects of the martyrs' social context: family relations, occupation etc. Bremmer, "The Motivation of Martyrs. Perpetua and the Palestinians," 547.

important theme. As a young mother, separated from her breast-feeding infant, she experiences the early days of imprisonment as a torment: "I was tortured with worry for my baby [*macerabar sollicitudine infantis*] there" (3.6). When she gets to nurse him, he is faint with hunger, and she discusses his needs with her mother (3.8).

For a short while the son is allowed to stay with her, and Perpetua's happiness is vividly described:

> At once I recovered my health, relieved as I was of my worry and anxiety over the child. My prison had suddenly become a palace, so that I wanted to be there rather than anywhere else. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 3.9)

But such motherly bliss cannot last. Perpetua's confession has the effect of severing the strong ties she had with her son. She is condemned *ad bestias*, and her father refuses to let her have the baby with her in prison any longer.

What kind of mother is this? A very good one, the narrative seems to claim. Even after she is condemned to fight the beasts, she wants to continue to nurse the child, but her father does not allow this (6.7). As I noted in Chapter Two, it was common among upper-class women to hire wet-nurses to feed their babies, although this practice was highly criticized by Greco-Roman moralists, who thought mothers should nurse their babies themselves. Perpetua consistently nurses her baby herself and thus conforms to the ideals of writers such as Plutarch. He praised his wife for having nursed their infant son: "you had nursed him at your own breast … For such conduct was noble and it showed true mother love," (*Cons. ux.* 609e). Osiek and MacDonald have argued that by picturing Perpetua as an ideal mother, the story negotiates the unease that must have been felt over the fact that she actually gives up her baby for her Christian faith.[60] Perpetua is not depicted as indifferent towards her son's fate, but is portrayed as a loving and devoted mother. That Perpetua's son seems to be taken well care of, probably by her mother, after her death, works towards the same effect of soothing the tension between motherhood and martyrdom.[61]

Perpetua's behavior is also in conformity with the ideals of the upper-class matron with regard to respectability and concern for sexual modesty. This is particularly evident when she fights in the arena.[62] She asks for a pin to fasten her hair, and pulls down the ripped tunic, "thinking more of her modesty

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[60] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 46–47.

[61] Odd Magne Bakke, *When Children Became People. The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, trans. Brian McNeil (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005), 266.

[62] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 48.

than of her pain" (*pudoris potius memor quam doloris*, 20.2). Plutarch tells several stories about brave women concerned with preserving their modesty in extreme circumstances. These women, like Perpetua, are less worried about being killed than about being sexually shamed or violated.[63]

Despite the stress on her matronly state, the husband of Perpetua remains a rather shadowy figure. He is never mentioned by name or discussed. Why is the husband so obscure? Fatum argues that the husband is non-existent because Perpetua is transformed into a virgin heroine in the course of the story.[64] At one point, Perpetua is described as *matrona Christi* (18.2), thus placing Christ in the vacant position of husband. It should be noted, however, that the role as *matrona Christi* does not seem to be connected with virginity or sexual renunciation in the *Martyrdom*, as it is e.g. in the *Acts of Andrew* and numerous other early Christian texts.[65]

Another explanation for the obscurity of the husband has been suggested by Osiek. She claims that Perpetua's husband *is* present in the story, that he is in fact one of her co-martyrs, Saturus.[66] Osiek regards the strong relationship between Perpetua and Saturus as an implication that they were married, although the text does not say so explicitly.[67] Perpetua is certainly paired with Saturus—the two figure together in both their visions of heaven, and their deaths are matched—but marriage is not the most convincing interpretation. Kraemer and Lander suggest that the absent husband could be viewed either as evidence for a historical core in the narrative or as a standard type in early Christian conversion narratives, where the husband was often opposed to his wife's new-found religion.[68] But this standard type, as we know it for example from the Apocryphal Acts, is explicit rather than implied. In these stories the conflict (often over sexual renunciation) between apostle and husband becomes the main theme of the narrative. In the *Martyrdom*, however, it is not sexual renunciation, but perseverance in persecution, that is the ethical expectation of the believer. For such a con-

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[63] Plutarch, *Mulier. virt*. 249; 251; 253.

[64] Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 232.

[65] *Acts Andr*. 16 (see discussion in Chapter Four). For the metaphor of Jesus as bridegroom/husband in early Christianity, see Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and the Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis."

[66] Carolyn Osiek, "Perpetua's Husband," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2002). Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 232.

[67] Osiek argues that the marriage between Perpetua and Saturus must have been a familiar fact to the first audience, and is therefore not mentioned by the narrator. Osiek, "Perpetua's Husband," 290.

[68] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1059.

flict, it may perhaps make more sense to foreground Perpetua's relationship with her father and son, rather than with her husband.

The absence of the husband in the narrative may be explained as quite natural, due to the powerful *paterfamilias* institution in the Roman Empire, particularly in the West and among the classes that held Roman citizenship. Roman women in this period were usually married *sine manu*. This meant that they remained members of their own *familia* and did not change their family name (hence Vibia is Perpetua's paternal ancestral name).[69] It has, moreover, been argued that the relationship between fathers and daughters had a special significance in Roman culture. To a larger extent than Greeks and Etruscans, Romans gave prominence to the role of daughter, and wrote about a father's fond feelings for individual daughters.[70] The conjugal conflicts in the Apocryphal Acts, which are Greek and stem from the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, perhaps reflect a stronger social concern for the conjugal relationship and legal ties between husband and wife. Perpetua's husband may therefore not be "needed" in the narrative, because the father-daughter relationship is better suited to exemplify the familial conflict inherent in Perpetua's conversion: her choice of a new family. Due to Perpetua's high status, it is indeed necessary to maintain that she was properly married and thus that her child was legitimate, but the husband *per se* seems to be of no interest. What, then, is Perpetua's relationship to her father? This is the subject of the next sub-chapter.

Perpetua and Her Father

The encounters Perpetua has with her father, interwoven in the narrative with the vision accounts, make up a significant part of the prison notes. The father is "Roman" in his conviction that she should sacrifice, and he represents the wish of the state within the family.[71] He visits her four times in prison, begging her to change her mind for the sake of her family (3.1; 5.1–5; 6.2; 9.2–3). Both the father and the procurator appeal to Perpetua's duties as daughter and mother in order to persuade her to sacrifice. The father refers to his own grey hair and invokes the whole family, with brothers, mother and

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[69] Beryl Rawson, *The Family in Ancient Rome. New Perspectives* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 18–19.

[70] See Judith P. Hallett, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society. Women and the Elite Family* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), esp. 62–133.

[71] According to Ronsse, "Perpetua is the embodiment of Christian ideas and, therefore, her father's enemy." Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," 318.

aunts (5.2–5). Finally, he appeals to her feelings for her son, who cannot live if she dies (5.3). The conflict between the wills of father and daughter makes clear the personal cost for Perpetua in her choice of religion. As noted, it is not a coincidence that it is the father who plays such a role in the narrative: the *paterfamilias* was the most powerful person in a young woman's life.

Perpetua's father shows a strange mixture of tender affection and violent, almost crazy behavior. In terms of the protocols of masculinity, the father is portrayed as far from an ideal man: he is lacking in both self-control and authority. He is not able to control his anger and despair, but is governed by passions rather than reason. Further, he is unable to control his daughter, over whom he has authority. Unlike Perpetua, who is persuasive and forceful when she speaks, the father is unable to turn his daughter around. He starts out by calling her daughter and ends up calling her a lady (*non filiam nominabat, sed dominam*, 5.5). He also wonders if he is worthy to be called her father (*si dignus sum a te pater vocari*, 5.2), and repeatedly falls at her feet. Through these encounters we perceive the gradual inversion of authority and masculinity from father to daughter.[72] Still, the father is quite aware of the rules governing the contest for masculinity. Underneath the whole argument lies his fear of being shamed because of his daughter's misbehavior; he fears the "reproach of men" (*dedecus hominum*) and how it will affect the whole family: "Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us! None of us will ever be able to speak freely again if anything happens to you" (5.2).

The father's fears come true when he is beaten by the soldiers at Perpetua's trial:

> When my father persisted in trying to dissuade me, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrown to the ground and beaten with a rod [*proici et uirga percussus est*]. I felt sorry for father, just as if I myself had been beaten. I felt sorry for his pathetic old age [*senecta eius misera*]. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 6.5)

The father is severely humbled through this beating. He is treated as a *humilior*, although he is a respectable man. His decision to keep Perpetua's son (6.7) immediately after this incident shows that in some respects he is still powerful. However, in Greco-Roman society, the upper-class male's domination over others was justified by his ability to control himself.[73]

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[72] Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 99.

[73] Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, 82–83; Moore and Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees."

Hence, Perpetua's father is exercising a power he has not rightly gained. By letting himself be ruled by passions rather than by reason, he has caused his own downfall.

At their last meeting no conversation takes place. Perpetua is already condemned and there is no further chance of persuasion:

> Now the day of the contest was approaching, and my father came to see me overwhelmed with sorrow. He started tearing hairs from his beard and threw them on the ground; he then threw himself on the ground and began to curse his old age and to say such words as would move all creation. I felt sorry for his unhappy old age [*infelici senecta eius*]. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 9.2)

The father's age underscores his emasculation. In antiquity, a man past his prime was considered lacking in masculinity.[74] That the father is tearing at his beard is yet another sign of his effeminate state.[75] Clement of Alexandria warns against men plucking out their beards and calls them "lewd wretches and effeminate [βατάλους δὲ καὶ γύννιδας]" (*Paed.* 3.3).[76]

It has been noted how the *Martyrdom* utilizes the imagery of upper and lower body to show superiority and inferiority.[77] In their encounters, Perpetua is always positioned above her father. As he prostrates himself or is thrown to the ground, Perpetua stands tall. The same upper/lower body imagery can also be seen in her visionary encounters with the dragon and the Egyptian.[78] Her father is not present in the visions; here, the dragon and the Egyptian are her opponents. She steps on their heads, and in her fight with the Egyptian she kicks his face (10.10). Although her father is not evil, his pleas and supplications are temptations she needs to overcome in order to win the heavenly reward.[79] His attempts at persuading her to sacrifice are

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[74] Marilyn B. Skinner, "*Ego mulier*: The Construction of Male Sexuality in Catullus," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Marilyn B. Skinner and Judith P. Hallett (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 135. See also Tim G. Parkin, *Old age in the Roman World. A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 241–242.

[75] Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 102; Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," 40.

[76] Greek retrieved from TLG.

[77] Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 109–110; Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," 37–38; Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 98–100.

[78] The same deference in body positions is also found in Saturus' vision, when members of the clergy, a presbyter and a bishop, throw themselves at Perpetua's and Saturus' feet (13.2–3).

[79] McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins from Thecla to Joan of Arc*, 23.

called diabolical arguments (*argumentis diaboli*, 3.3). Similarly, the dragon and the Egyptian represent the devil (10.14; 18.7). Thus, there is a connection between dragon, Egyptian and father, all representing diabolical contestants she needs to overcome in order to win the immortal crown.[80]

Not only is Perpetua more powerful than her father; the father is also superseded by another Father and *dominus*, namely God. God is cast in fatherly imagery in the visions. Although Perpetua fails to persuade her earthly father of her choice, she has a heavenly father who understands her and loves her. In the first vision, God is portrayed as a shepherd, with grey hair like her father's, who welcomes her to heaven and calls her child (*bene venisti*, τέκνον, 4.9). In Saturus' vision God is an old man with white hair. Angels lift them up to kiss him, and he caresses their faces (12.2–5). Likewise, in the arena vision Perpetua is called daughter and given a blessing by a heavenly figure (*filia, pax tecum*, 10.13). In contrast to Perpetua's earthly father, whose behavior is erratic, the fatherly God of the visions is tender and loving. Perpetua's relationship to God is, then, that of a daughter to a father. Just as she had been her earthly father's favorite over her brothers (5.2), now she is God's favorite child (*Dei delicata*, 18.2).

As I noted in Chapter Two, the image of the Emperor as *Pater Patriae*, Father of the Fatherland, rested on the concept of fatherhood. The *paterfamilias* exercised power over his family, *patria potestas*, in much the same way as the emperor exercised power over his citizens and other underlings. Both institutions were shaped by the society's perception of masculinity. These intersecting structures of domination and subordination are invoked in Perpetua's conflict with her father: the father represents the Roman Empire. The relationship between father and daughter thus expresses both a critique and an inversion of Roman power relations.[81]

Perpetua's Transgender Performances

The daughter rhetorically overpowers her father. The woman wins a fight agianst a gladiator. Is Perpetua masculinized in these power contestations? In her final vision she "becomes male," but does she also exhibit male behavior elsewhere in the narrative? It is a matter of contention between

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[80] For the correlation between father/dragon/Egyptian/devil, see Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter, oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum. Ein Versuch zur Passio sanctarum Perpetua et Felicitatis*, 184–185; Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes*, 46, 195; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, 163.

[81] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1060.

scholars whether Perpetua is primarily depicted as masculine,[82] feminine[83] or both.[84] Perpetua's separation from her baby serves as a case in point. The differing scholarly views on Perpetua's masculinization come to the fore in the varying interpretations of this scene. After the martyrs have confessed in the forum and been condemned to the beasts by the governor, Perpetua's father refuses to return the baby to her in prison:

> *Et quomodo Deus uoluit, necque ille amplius mammas desiderauit neque mihi feruorum fecerunt ne sollicitudine infantis et dolore mammarum macerarer.*
>
> But as God willed, the baby had no further desire for the breast, nor did I suffer any inflammation; and so I was relieved of any anxiety for my child and of any discomfort in my breasts. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 6.8)

Miraculously, neither Perpetua nor the baby suffers from this separation. God intervenes to heal breast pains, fevers and worries. This is the last time we hear of the baby in the narrative. Fatum understands the passage as exemplifying Perpetua's *ascetic* transformation, in which a young woman rejects reproduction and female embodiment, and selects chastity and a spiritual identity. Perpetua thus becomes, in a sense, a male virgin-hero.[85] Perkins, however, does not regard the separation of mother and child as part of any masculinization at all: the baby is taken from Perpetua, not given away by choice. She insists that it is "a mother's, not a man's body" that is central in the narrative.[86]

I suggest that a middle position is called for. Something happens with Perpetua's body, as Fatum claims. By God's will, her body is healed from such female problems as fever in the breast caused by the abrupt ending of weaning. God's miraculous intervention prepares the ground for the gladiator vision, in which her body becomes male. Yet, Perkins' observation, that the maternal body is not depicted as shameful, is also important.[87] In my opinion, Perpetua is described both as an ideal matron and as a perfect man

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[82] Aspegren, *The Male Woman. A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church*, 138–139; Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 230–232.

[83] Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," esp. 324–426.

[84] Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 94–111; Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*, 38–42.

[85] Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 232–234.

[86] Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 326. In a different vein, Maureen Tilley regards Perpetua's separation from her child as part of her striving after self-definition against men who try to control her: "She disengaged herself from her infant son who could have controlled her when he grew up." Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," 836, 40.

[87] Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 326–327.

in the narrative. The text oscillates between male and female characteristics in the descriptions of Perpetua. This gender ambiguity cannot be explained by reference to the authenticity of the diary[88] or to a distinction between dream/vision and reality.[89] As I will argue in what follows, the oscillation between the ideal feminine and the ideal masculine is an ongoing process throughout the narrative.

Perpetua's behavior is in many instances in conformity with the ancient protocols of masculinity: She exhibits control of self as well as mastery over others. Perpetua's control of self can be seen in her courage and her composure. In the beginning of her imprisonment, she is frightened and worried (3.5–6). At this time she has just been baptized, together with the other catechumens, and the Spirit has revealed to her "not to ask for any other favour of the water but simply the perseverance of the flesh (*sufferentiam carnis*, 3.5)." After this initial struggle with heat, darkness and anxiety, she is strong throughout, and does not display emotions, but perseveres, just as the Spirit predicted. Perpetua's composed behavior and reasonable speech stand in contrast to her father's exaggerated emotional outbursts.[90] She is calm and courageous in her dealings with legal authorities, family and co-martyrs. When they march into the arena, she wears her body like a man, staring down everyone with her gaze (18.2).[91] According to Carlin Barton, unflinching eye contact in the arena was a means of demonstrating will: "The ability to maintain eye contact was the ability to respond to a challenge with one's eyes, and averting the eyes was not only a sign of, but the very experience of, submission or defeat."[92] Perpetua seems, then, to be ready and willing to fight: she takes the challenge like a man. During their fight with the heifer she has the wits to reach out and help Felicitas (20.6), just as a brave soldier during battle would help his comrade-in-arms. Volition, the ability to

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[88] Some scholars argue that Perpetua, in the diary notes, transcends her female gender, while the narrative frame refeminizes her. See e.g. Castelli, "'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," 35; Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*, 12. For arguments against this view, see Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 96.

[89] According to Miller, the dreams offer a "new, empowered sense of self-identity" in opposition to the patriarchal social order: "the dream is an irruption into the master narrative of paternal logic, which it subverts and rebels against, offering as it does a competing vision of the female." Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, 181.

[90] Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 37.

[91] Bremmer, "The Motivation of Martyrs. Perpetua and the Palestinians," 543; Perkins, *The Suffering Self. Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, 112.

[92] Carlin A. Barton, "Savage Miracles: The Redemption of Lost Honor in Roman Society and the Sacrament of the Gladiator and the Martyr," *Representations* 45 (1994): 48–49.

control one's life, was central to the ideology of masculinity.[93] Perpetua's ultimate act of courage comes when she assists the gladiator in her own execution (21.9), and thus performs the role of gladiator herself. Hence, she is depicted as active and willing in her own death: "It was as though so great a woman, feared as she was by the unclean spirit, could not be dispatched unless she herself were willing" (21.10).

The other protocol of masculinity, mastery over others, can be seen through Perpetua's rhetorical prowess; her speech is bold and persuasive. She is portrayed as one who speaks out against the authorities and even persuades them to change their decisions. She is not intimidated by the threats from her father or the prosecutor, but boldly confesses to being a Christian in front of the tribunal (6.4). Later she protests against ill treatment in the prison:

> Perpetua spoke to him directly. "Why can you not even allow us to refresh ourselves properly? For we are the most distinguished of the condemned prisoners, seeing that we belong to the emperor; we are to fight on his very birthday." (16.2–3)

This bold speech is different from the depiction of Maximilla's masculinity in the *Acts of Andrew*. As I noted in Chapter Four, male speech is not part of Maximilla's masculinization, but rather a space where femininity is retained. Perpetua speaks again in the theatre, when the martyrs are forced to wear Roman religious clothing (18.6–7). In this last incident, Perpetua even claims that they have come to the theatre of their own free will (*ad hoc sponte pervenimus*, 18.5).

Perpetua's speech is rhetorical—she has the ability to argue and persuade. Ronsse argues that Perpetua is portrayed as a skilled orator.[94] The argument she has with her father is an example of her rhetorical skill. Here Perpetua explains that just as an object cannot be called by any other name than what it is, so she cannot be called by any name other than Christian (*Christiana*, 3.2). She wins the argument with her father and thus proves her oratorical skills to be superior to those of her father.[95] During the martyrs' imprisonment, many people convert and become Christians, among them the head of the prison guards, Pudens (16.4; 17.3). Hence, she is the perfect μάρτυς, i.e. "witness,"[96] for the Christian faith.

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[93] Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 66.

[94] Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," 321.

[95] Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," 319–321; Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 36–38.

[96] LSJ.

Perpetua seems to be the leader of the group, speaking on their behalf and encouraging them. It is repeatedly stressed that she is privileged (*magnam dignatione*, 4.1; *dignam esse*, 7.2), as well as honored and powerful. She is even called *domina* in the same passage as God is called *dominus*,[97] and in the visionary afterlife she is honored and admired by angels (11.7). She encourages her fellow believers with her final words: "Stand fast in the faith and love one another, and do not be weakened by what we have gone through" (*In fide state et inuicem omnes diligite, et passionibus nostris ne scandalizemini*, 20.10). The visions underscore Perpetua's position as powerful and active. Courageous and determined, Perpetua steps on the dragon's head (first vision) and on the Egyptian's head (fourth vision) and she wins victory. Similarly, through her fervent, authoritative prayer, Dinocrates gains health and happiness in the afterlife. Even Perpetua's ability to receive the visions is a matter of authority: Her relationship with the Lord is such that she can demand a vision and get it (*Et postulaui, et ostensum est mihi hoc*, 4.2).[98]

However, Perpetua's masculinity is closely connected to her male company. John Marshall argues that she gains status through primarily interacting with male authority figures and family members.[99] In the visions, there are no female characters except for herself.[100] Interestingly, Perpetua's position as the sole female in her own envisioned afterlife is a position of following rather than leading. Contrary to her role as leader of the group of prisoners, here the men seem to be her spiritual guides. In the first vision, Saturus climbs the ladder first (4.5), and in the fourth vision Pomponius leads her to the arena and promises her that he will fight alongside her (10.4). In Saturus' vision, Perpetua and Saturus are side by side all the time, and talk together when chastising the clergy (13.1–6). The elders who prostrate themselves before them, do so in front of this male-female couple, not before Perpetua alone. It seems that the visions supply Perpetua with the male counterpart that she lacks on the historical level of the narrative. Is this a way to reduce the troubling implications of a woman who speaks in public and is the leader of her martyr group?[101]

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[97] As Castelli too observes. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 88.

[98] Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 88.

[99] Marshall, "Postcolonialism and the Practice of History," 103.

[100] Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, 175.

[101] To a certain extent, Saturus also functions as a counterpart to Perpetua outside the visions, although he is a less important figure than Perpetua in the narrative. He is the

Agonistic Masculinity

Perpetua's gender-bending reaches its clearest manifestation in the fourth vision, when she sees herself physically becoming male upon entering the arena.[102] She knows that she is condemned to fight wild beasts, so she is surprised when it turns out in the vision that she is going to fight as a gladiator against an Egyptian opponent:

> *Et exiuit quidam contra me Aegyptius foedus specie cum auditoribus suis pugnaturus mecum. Ueniunt et ad me adolescentes decori, adiutores et fautores mei. Et expoliata sum et facta sum masculus; et coeperunt me fauisores mei oleo defricare, quomodo solent in agone.*
>
> Then out came an Egyptian against me, of vicious appearance, together with his seconds, to fight with me. There also came up to me some handsome young men to be my seconds and assistants. My clothes were stripped off, and suddenly I was a man. My seconds begun to rub me down with oil (as they are wont to do before a contest). (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 10.6–7)

One might assume that Perpetua's "discovery" relies on bodily signs, since it takes place in the process of undressing, but the text offers no details about what these signs may be. When Perpetua becomes male, she becomes a very specific type of man, namely a gladiator. The figure of the gladiator in the Roman literary imagination is complex and ambiguous: violent, oversexualised, foreign and under-class, yet still heroic and virtuous. On the one hand, it was honorable and praiseworthy to excel in fighting and possess military *virtus*.[103] Gladiatorial fights recalled warfare and the courage of the soldier.[104] Hence, images of soldier and athlete merge in the figure of the gladiator.[105] On the other hand, gladiators were considered *infames*, a category of shame that also included actors, prostitutes and pimps. These people had relinquished control over their bodies by submitting them to the pleasures of others. They were therefore considered to be incapable of control and the proper use of authority.[106] Barton describes the extreme ambiguity attached to the gladiator:

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one besides Perpetua who has visions; in the arena account, he is at one gate comforting a surviving member of the Christian community at the same time as Perpetua is doing the same at another gate (20.10; 21.1–4). Osiek also notes this and explains it with the hypothesis that they were married. Osiek, "Perpetua's Husband," 290.

[102] Petersen, "Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," 29.

[103] Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 35.

[104] Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 36–37; Carlin A Barton, "The Scandal of the Arena," *Representations* 27 (1989): 26, n. 18.

[105] Seesengood, *Competing Identities. The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christianity*, 52.

[106] Alison Futrell, *The Roman Games. A Sourcebook* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 130.

> He could be, and was, interpreted as the embodiment of the most ferocious, antique, and demanding code of valor—or as a degraded victim hanging at the end of a spiral of gratification: selfish, bankrupt, and desperate.[107]

During the Republic, gladiators were trained slaves,[108] but in the early Empire it became common for freedmen as well as free men, sometimes even of equestrian and senatorial ranks, to volunteer to become gladiators.[109] Those who volunteered to fight in the arena voluntarily became slaves and took an oath to hand themselves over to their master with body and soul, submitting to being beaten, burned and even killed by sword.[110] The gladiators' claim to *virtus* was through victory, and the defeated gladiator was ridiculed as effeminate.[111]

As a courageous gladiator, Perpetua wins a fist-fight with her opponent:

> We drew close to one another and began to let our fists fly [*mittere pugnos*]. My opponent tried to get hold of my feet, but I kept striking [*caedebam*] him in the face with the heels of my feet. Then I was raised up into the air and began to pummel [*caedere*] him without as it were touching the ground. Then when I noticed there was a lull, I put my two hands together linking the fingers of one hand with those of the other and thus I got hold of his head. He fell flat on his face and I stepped [*calcaui*] on his head. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 10.10–11)

This very physical description of fists, feet and face, punches, blows and kicks has been recognized as the wrestling game of παγκράτιον/*pancratium*.[112] The *pancratium* was originally a Greek sport, "a brutal free-for-all combining wrestling, boxing and kicking." It was taken over by the Romans and became particularly popular in North Africa.[113] Perpetua shows superior

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[107] Barton, "Savage Miracles: The Redemption of Lost Honor in Roman Society and the Sacrament of the Gladiator and the Martyr," 51–52. See also Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).

[108] The earliest gladiators were probably prisoners of war. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 102–103; Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, 269–270.

[109] Barton, "The Scandal of the Arena," 2, 10.

[110] Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 102. Barton explains the "widespread social phenomenon" that upper-class men volunteered to become gladiators as a new avenue for Roman aristocrats to compete for honor and *dignitas* when warfare was no longer an option. Barton, "The Scandal of the Arena," 9–11.

[111] There are reliefs that show defeated gladiators standing with their knees close together, indicating femininity. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 38–39.

[112] In the *Martyrdom*, the fist-fight is not called *pancratium*, but the description fits this ancient sport well. See Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 90; Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter, oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum. Ein Versuch zur Passio sanctarum Perpetua et Felicitatis*, 183; Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 268.

[113] Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, 125, 330.

bodily strength and fighting skills in her fight with the Egyptian. She embodies *virtus* and earns honor in her victory. As she steps on the Egyptian's head, his body prostrated underneath her, the position of her body symbolizes her total superiority. This vision clearly creates an image of martyrdom as actively sought, rather than passively endured. Perpetua's suffering in the arena is quite cleverly recast and renamed as gladiatorial combat and soldierly warfare, as ἀγών and *pugna*.

How does the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* fit with the early Christian "becoming male" discourse, described in Chapter Two? Antti Marjanen argues that early Christian martyrdoms featuring women differ from the general pattern of early Christian gender-transformation language. "Becoming male" is usually used to express spiritual progress either through religious conversion or change in life-style (e.g. sexual asceticism).[114] For women martyrs, however, Marjanen claims that "'becoming male' does not stand for spiritual advancement or perfection but for an extra portion of courage, strength and firmness needed for the fight."[115] Marjanen's observation fits well with the analysis I have developed here. The *Martyrdom*'s gender-transformation language stresses successful endurance rather than spiritual progress. Perpetua's gender transformation is not a gradual process that goes exclusively in the direction of masculinity. Rather, the oscillation between the ideal feminine and the ideal masculine is an ongoing process. One could claim that there is a shift after her baptism, where she goes from worry about her infant to calm acceptance that everything is in God's hands. However, even before this episode she conquers her father with her superior rhetorical skills—a manly feat. Further, one could of course claim that she "becomes male" in her vision. But even within the arena vision there is tension between Perpetua's male and female characteristics. She is called "daughter" (*filia*, 10.13) and referred to as *she* (*illam*, 10.9), by the trainer, *lanista*, who supervises the fight.

The emphasis is not on a process of "becoming male," but on the fact that she supersedes her opponent in masculinity. Perpetua's power of persuasion over prison guards and military tribune, as well as her heroic assistance of the trembling hand of her executioner, serves the function of shaming the representatives of Roman power. This pattern has also been found in

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[114] Marjanen, "Male Women Martyrs: The Function of Gender-Transformation Language in Early Christian Martyrdom Accounts," 236–237.

[115] Marjanen, "Male Women Martyrs: The Function of Gender-Transformation Language in Early Christian Martyrdom Accounts," 247.

other early Christian and ancient Jewish martyrologies.[116] The characters' masculine behavior suggests that true masculinity resides in the virtuous and heroic actions of dying Christians/Jews, whether male or female. Pagan men, on the other hand, representing the families the martyrs leave behind and/or the Roman rulers, are constructed as effeminate, ruled by passions and unable to control their subjects. The agonistic masculinity of the *Martyrdom*, foregrounding competition and the visual display of male virtues, thus challenges the power base of Roman elite males and introduces the Christian group, represented through Perpetua, as victorious contenders for that role.

In conclusion, Perpetua "becomes male," in the sense that she exhibits (and even is the main exhibitor of) the *Martyrdom*'s agonistic masculinity. However, she does not "become male," understood as a gradual spiritual progress where she ends up firmly grounded at the male end of the gender continuum. As I have noted several times, the images of Perpetua as masculine are intertwined with images of her as an ideal woman. The complexity in the text, which reveals images of the ideal matron, the masculinized heroine, and even voyeuristic features of the naked female body (see discussion below), should not be reduced.

Transforming a Matron, Fixing a Slave

Perpetua's transformation is not, however, paralleled by any change on Felicitas' part. Unlike Perpetua, she does not exercise authority or leadership,[117] nor does she perform any other masculine acts. At the beginning of this chapter, I explored the childbearing scene of Felicitas. Felicitas' suffering in labor is compared to her suffering in martyrdom. This quintessentially female imagery is quite different from the agonistic imagery used to portray Perpetua's suffering. Few scholars have given sustained attention to the *differences* in the depictions of Perpetua and Felicitas. Fatum, however, has pointed out that the unchanging figure of Felicitas puts Perpetua's identity-transformation into relief.[118] Streete also notes a difference between Perpetua, who goes through a "complex process of verbal 'virilization' and 'refeminization'" and Felicitas, whose constant female embodi-

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[116] See Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 80–91; Moore and Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees."

[117] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1060.

[118] Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 230.

ment is emphasized.[119] The primary concentration on Perpetua throughout the narrative and the differences in portrayals of the two women are indications, I would argue, of the ideology of slavery to be found in this text.

The biblical passage quoted in the introduction is interesting in this respect:

> *In nouissimis enim diebus, dicit dominus, effundam de Spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et prophetabunt filii filiaeque eorum; et super seruos et ancillas meas de meo Spiritu effundam; et iuuenes uisiones uidebunt, et senes somnia somniabunt*.
>
> For in the last days, God declares, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and their *sons* and *daughters* shall prophecy and on my *manservants* and *maidservants* I will pour my Spirit, and the *young men* shall see visions and the *old men* shall dream dreams. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 1.4, emphases added)

This passage is meant as biblical proof of the wonderful favors God will grant believers in the end-times, and the martyrdom narrative is then offered as an example of this. Kraemer and Lander suggest that the *Martyrdom* is a narrative dramatization of the citation.[120] In this passage, gender, age and class are used as identity markers. How do the martyrs fit into the various categories presented here? The group of catechumens we meet at the beginning of the narrative includes both men and women, slave and free, but they are all called young (*adolescentes*, 2.1). However, there is a sixth martyr, who may represent the category of the older, free man: Saturus, who is introduced as "he who was later to give himself up of his own accord" (4.5). It is Felicitas and Saturus, in addition to Perpetua, that receive most attention in the text. Together, they represent the young free woman (Perpetua), the young slave woman (Felicitas) and the older, free man (Saturus). Revocatus, Saturninus and Secundulus also fit into the biblical prophecy as representatives of the categories of young men and manservants, but they are hardly more than extras in the narrative.

The wording in 1.4 is not a direct quotation of any known Latin version of either Acts 2:17–18 or Joel 2:28–29.[121] Interestingly, the passage as quoted in the *Martyrdom* ascribess visionary abilities to sons and daughters—who will prophesy—and to young and old[122]—who will have visions and dreams.

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119 Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*, 38, 40.

120 Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1056.

121 Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1056–1057.

122 Although the grammatical gender of *iuuenis* and *senex* is masculine, the terms are sometimes used gender inclusively. *Iuuenis*: "a young person of either sex"; *senex*: "old man," "old person," OLD. Thus, Musurillo's translation is somewhat misleading.

Slaves of both sexes, however, will not "do" anything, but the Lord will pour his Spirit on them. This is close to the wording of Joel 2:29. Acts 2:18 adds that slaves shall prophesy, but this is omitted in the *Martyrdom*.[123] The quotation correlates with the story, where only two of the martyrs have visions—Perpetua, the young, free woman, and Saturus, the older, free man. Felicitas is not depicted as having any visions. Can we detect here a pattern of passivity and activity where free people are thought of and portrayed as active and slaves are thought of and portrayed as passive?

Ancient ideas about childbirth cast the parturient mother as someone who passively had to endure extreme suffering. By casting Felicitas in this role in the *Martyrdom*, she is presented as female and passive rather than male and active in her suffering. As a slave and a woman, she is doubly fit to play this role. To endure suffering was an important characteristic of a good slave. Harrill has shown how early Christian texts employ the type/anti-type of the "faithful slave" and the "domestic enemy" known from ancient literature. He describes the faithful slave as one "who accepted the master's authority and point of view so fully as to endure torture and to give all, even life itself, to save the master."[124] According to Harrill, early Christian martyrdom stories depicted loyal slaves as monuments of faith, as a "spectacle," that other characters and the reader could emulate.[125] The slave girl Blandina in the *Letter of the Churches of Lyon and Vienne* is one such "unlikely hero," who shows fidelity and endurance.[126] In her suffering, Blandina, like Felicitas, bears a likeness to Christ, when she is hung on a post in the form of a cross.[127] The terrible torture of Blandina is described in detail, whereas we hear little about the torments of her mistress, who is also among the imprisoned. Both Blandina's and Felicitas' bodies are used in the narratives as spectacle, as sites to exhibit suffering in its most cruel form. Both women, moreover, are transparent. As Burrus argues, the reader is supposed to see "through the figure of the tortured, 'birthing' slave woman to the image of the suffering Christ within."[128]

The narrative tells us nothing about Felicitas' earthly owners, but God is portrayed as her master: she is one of the Lord's *ancillas* noted in the

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[123] Acts 2:18: "καί γε ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους μου καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας μου ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου, **καὶ προφητεύσουσιν**." (Emphasis added).

[124] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions*, 145–146.

[125] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions*, 157.

[126] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions*, 161.

[127] *Letter of the Churches of Lyon and Vienne* 41.

[128] Burrus, "Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr," 69.

introduction (1.4). Later it is claimed that Felicitas' childbirth is a favor from her master (*gratia domini*, 15.1). For this *dominus*, Felicitas is prepared to die. Loyal and submissive, she endures what befalls her and is willing to suffer for her Lord. Nevertheless, Felicitas claims that there is reciprocity in suffering: Christ will also suffer for her. This is an important point; in fact, it is the only point Felicitas makes throughout the story. In her one short speech, she argues for the likeness between her own suffering and Christ's. In Phil 2:7–8, Jesus is depicted as not talking back but remaining faithful unto death, like a slave: "[He] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death on a cross." In 1 Peter, slaves are exhorted to "endure pain while suffering unjustly" (2:19) and Christ is held up as an example for slaves to emulate:

> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.[129] (1 Pet 2:21–23)

In her suffering, Felicitas resembles Christ, who also endured extreme suffering.

Felicitas is not portrayed as breastfeeding her daughter after birth, as Perpetua did with her son. Her baby is given away more or less immediately: "And she gave birth to a girl; and one of the sisters brought her up as her own daughter" (15.7). The consequence of not having nursed the baby becomes clear in the arena, when Felicitas' breasts are dripping with milk (20.2). The text expresses no concern for Felicitas' separation from her baby immediately after giving birth, whereas Perpetua gets heavenly help so that she does not worry about her son or suffer inflammation from weaning. Felicitas suffers physically in childbirth, but not, as it seems, emotionally from the separation. Stephanie Cobb interprets the economical dismissal of Felicitas' baby as a masculinization of Felicitas, similar to Perpetua's.[130] I believe that the abrupt dismissal of the baby is better explained as revealing a disinterest in a slave's emotions. Although slave owners sometimes encouraged family unions among their slaves, slave children were often separated from their mothers at a very early age.[131] It was common for a slave to have to

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[129] I am grateful to Halvor Moxnes for bringing the similarities to 1 Peter to my attention.

[130] Cobb, *Dying to Be Men. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, 112–113.

[131] Beryl Rawson, "Family Life among the Lower Classes at Rome in the First Two Centuries of the Empire," *Classical Philology* 61, no. 2 (1966): 79.

give up her child, and such an incident probably aroused no sentimentality on the part of the owner.

Ronsse questions whether Felicitas is a genuine slave, and suggests that the term *conserua* is a Christian metaphor for wife. She notes that the meaning of Felicitas' name is 'success, good fortune,' and claims that "she is portrayed throughout the work as embodying happiness," and is thus "the ideal figure to represent birth."[132] I concur that the names Felicitas and Perpetua most likely are figurative.[133] For example, the narrator claims that the martyrs would experience joy in their suffering (*passionis suae felicitatem*, 17.1), perhaps punning on Felicitas' name. However, I would argue that it is not the meaning of her name but her slave status that makes her an ideal figure to represent birth. It is in her eternal fate that Felicitas rejoices, not in this life. On earth, she embodies suffering and pain rather than happiness.[134]

Felicitas' suffering is quite different from Perpetua's. Shaw has argued that Jewish and Christian martyrdom stories gradually changed the interpretation of suffering. In these texts, the passive and thus implicitly "womanish" suffering of the martyr was reinterpreted as manly and active. Using imagery from sports and gladiatorial games, these texts shaped an ideology of suffering based on what Shaw calls "the agonistic model of the competitive disciplining of the body."[135] This description resonates with the *Martyrdom's* representation of Perpetua. However, whereas Perpetua's suffering is portrayed as agonistic, Felicitas' suffering is quite typical for a woman: she suffers and endures the pangs of childbearing. Felicitas can be portrayed as someone struggling in labor alone because of her low social status. Alone among the martyrs, she does not seem to embody (agonistic) masculinity: she lacks rhetorical skills and her bodily spectacle is genuinely feminine. She

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[132] Ronsse, "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," 303.

[133] The figurative aspect of the female martyrs' names was recognized also by the *Martyrdom*'s earliest interpreters. Augustine made a major point out of the martyrs' "perpetual felicity" in his sermons on the *dies natalis* of Perpetua and Felicitas. Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*, 59–62.

[134] Harrill suggests that names in early Christian martyrdom stories often have an ironical touch: "This use of names to (mis)lead the reader to associate qualitites of character in a certain episode, only to develop the contrary as the story progresses, was a popular device of suspense and surprise in ancient novels … Blandina is not bland; Biblis is not a fragile strip of *biblis* … Perpetua does not enjoy a long-lasting life; the slave Felicity does not have good fortune, and so on." Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions*, 160.

[135] Shaw, "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs," 289.

thus serves as a contrast or foil, fixed in her feminine, childbearing and lactating state, to Perpetua's transgender performances.[136] Burrus suggests that the figure of Felicitas functions "partly to undermine the nuanced gender subversions of the diary and dream texts."[137] Such an undermining of masculine traits may also be reflected in the arena scene, to which I now turn.

Female Bodies in the Arena

The description of the two women in the arena is a good place to explore the relations between the two women. For the first time, the two appear together in the narrative: they march into the arena together (18.2–3) and they fight the heifer side by side (20.1–6). Finally, they both receive the sword, together with their fellow martyrs (21.7–9). What happens as Perpetua and Felicitas become spectacle, as they are put on display in the amphitheatre? What is it that the audience sees?

The *Martyrdom* evokes vivid images of a spectacle that Christians were advised not to attend.[138] The text itself is negative with regard to several varieties of Roman public performances. In Saturus' vision, quarrelling Christians are likened to people arguing at the races (13.6). The crowd in the amphitheater is charged with taking part in the crime committed, since they watch it with their eyes (*oculos suos comites homicidii*, 21.7). It is even suggested that those who watch the show are enemies of the martyrs and that they will be recognized (and condemned) on the day of judgement (17.1–3). Nevertheless, listening to and reading martyrologies were accepted and recommended forms of engagement with spectacle for Christians.[139]

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[136] As Fatum also argues. Fatum, "Lidelsens politik. Fra Paulus til Perpetua," 230.

[137] Burrus, "Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr," 68.

[138] See e.g. Tertullian, *Apology*, 38.4: "We renounce all your spectacles, as strongly as we renounce the matters originating them, which we know were conceived of superstition, when we give up the very things which are the basis of their representations. Among us nothing is ever said, or seen, or heard, which has anything in common with the madness of the circus, the immodesty of the theatre, the atrocities of the arena, the useless exercises of the wrestling-ground." For Christian responses to spectacle in the Roman Empire, see e.g. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*; Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire. Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[139] See e.g. Tertullian, *The Shows* 29.3–5: "These are the pleasures, these the spectacles that befit Christian men—holy, everlasting, free. Count these as your circus games, fix your eyes on the courses of the world, the gliding seasons, reckon up the periods of time, long for the goal of the final consummation, defend the societies of the churches, be startled at God's signal, be roused up at the angel's trump, glory in the palms of martyrdom. If the literature of the stage delight you, we have literature in abundance of our own—plenty of

In the *Martyrdom* the women's naked bodies and the violence inflicted upon them is graphically drawn out. Shaw calls the public executions in the theater "the national pornography of the Roman state."[140] Nudity was common, and arena events often mimed Greco-Roman myths and historical events that were sexually explicit.[141] Perpetua and Felicitas are both undressed, but the descriptions of their bodies are very different. This is clear from the minute they march into the arena:

> Perpetua went along with shining countenance [*lucido uultu*] and calm step, as the beloved of God, as a wife of Christ, putting down everyone's stare by her own intense gaze. With them also was Felicitas, glad that she had safely given birth so that now she could fight the beast, going from one bloodbath to another, from the midwife to the gladiator, ready to wash after childbirth in a second baptism. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 18.1–3)

The difference in their physical appearance when they enter the arena highlights their different social status. The description of Perpetua is focused on her face, her unflinching gaze and detached expression. The description of Felicitas plays on her recent childbearing and focuses on the flow of blood from her body. This differentiation continues when the animals are released:

> For the young women, however, the Devil had prepared a mad heifer [*ferocissimam uaccam*]. This was an unusual animal, but it was chosen that their sex might be matched with that of the beast [*sexui earum etiam de bestia aemulatus*]. So they were stripped naked [*dispoliatae*], placed in nets and thus brought out into the arena. Even the crowd was horrified when they saw that one was a delicate young girl [*puellam delicatam*] and the other was a woman fresh from childbirth [*alteram a partu recentem*] with the milk still dripping from her breasts [*stillantibus mammis*]. And so they were brought back again and dressed in unbelted tunics. First the heifer tossed Perpetua and she fell on her back. Then sitting up she pulled down the tunic that was ripped along the side so that it covered her thighs, thinking more of her modesty than of her

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verses, sentences, songs, proverbs; and these not fabulous, but true; not tricks of art, but plain realities. Would you have also fightings and wrestlings? Well, of these there is no lacking, and they are not of slight account. Behold unchastity overcome by chastity, perfidy slain by faithfulness, cruelty stricken by compassion, impudence thrown into the shade by modesty: these are the contests we have among us, and in these we win our crowns. Would you have something of blood too? You have Christ's."

[140] Shaw, "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs," 306.

[141] Seesengood, *Competing Identities. The Athlete and the Gladiator in Early Christianity*, 91. For an argument for the reenactment of myth in the arena, see Katherine M. Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990).

> pain [*pudoris potius memor quam doloris*]. Next she asked for a pin to fasten her untidy hair: for it was not right that a martyr should die with her hair in disorder, lest she might seem to be mourning in her hour of triumph.
>
> (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 20.1–5)

Both women are stripped naked but, despite their common sex, the narrator brings different parts of their bodies to the readers' attention. Perpetua is young and beautiful, her thighs are visible and her hair is dishevelled. In contrast to the male body she posseses in her vision of the arena fight, here her naked and explicitly female body is at the center of attention. Felicitas, on the other hand, is described in her post-partum state. Attention is given to her breasts, which are dripping with milk.

Briefly, in the middle of the passage, the attention shifts from the spectacle to the spectators. What the crowd sees is too much for them. They are not titillated, but disgusted by the sight. So the women are dressed, although still insufficiently: Perpetua pulls desperately at her torn tunic to cover her thigh. At this point, Felicitas fades out of scope and all attention is directed towards Perpetua, who tries to bind up her hair. A woman's unbound hair could have a range of symbolic meanings in antiquity. It could be interpreted as an act of mourning, as the narrator also notes.[142] Moreover, unbound hair was a sign of sexual availability. Prostitutes wore their hair unbound, and loosening the hair is, in many Greek and Roman texts, an invitation to sex.[143] The bound hair of a married woman symbolized her sexual unavailability to any man but her husband, and it was therefore shameful for a woman to appear in public with her hair unbound.[144] Soranus mentions in the *Gynecology* that some superstitious women believe a woman in labor should loosen her hair (*Gyn* 2.6). Thus, loose hair might also give connotations of a woman in labor. Perpetua's efforts to preserve her modesty (*pudor*, 20.4) by fixing her hair and covering her bare legs show how shameful this situation is. It is an attempt to reinstall social order, propriety and control, to deny that she is an out-of-bounds woman. Felicitas is not described as trying to preserve

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[142] The connection to funerary rites may be one reason why some early Christian baptismal manuals stipulate unbound hair for women baptizands, thus playing on the notion of baptism as burial (and rebirth). Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 48–49.

[143] Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, 49–50.

[144] Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the 'Sinful Woman' in Luke 7:36–50," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 4 (2005): 682.

her modesty. As Glancy has noted, the "maintenance of reputation for modesty was a prerogative associated with women of higher status."[145]

After the fight with the heifer is over, Perpetua seems quite confused. It turns out that she has no remembrance of the episode because she was in ecstasy in the Spirit (*adeo in spiritu et in extasi fuerat*, 20.8). She has to be shown the signs on her body and dress before she is convinced that she has already fought the cow. How can she have the presence of mind to care for her honor when she is in some kind of sleep and does not remember what happened? It seems that both Perpetua's ecstatic state and her prudent behavior serve to preserve her honor. If Perpetua does not remember the shaming experience, the authorities have failed in their efforts to expose and humiliate.

After each martyr has fought against their prescribed animals, those still alive are brought into the arena to receive death by the sword. Perpetua is the last to receive the final blow:

> But the mob asked that their bodies be brought out into the open that their eyes might be the guilty witness of the sword that pierced the flesh [*ut gladio penetranti in eorum corpore*] … The others took the sword in silence and without moving … Perpetua, however, had yet to taste more pain. She screamed [*exululauit*] as she was struck on the bone; then she took the trembling hand of the gladiator and guided it to her throat [*iugulum suum transtulit*]. It was as though so great a woman, feared as she was by the unclean spirit, could not be dispatched unless she herself were willing [*nisi ipsa uoluisset*]. (*M. Perp. and Fel.* 21.7–10)

In the death scene, it is only Perpetua's death that is described in detail. It is underscored that she was "willing," and thus active and brave, but her death is still in many ways feminine. Greeks and Romans thought of the sexual act as first and foremost penetration.[146] To have the active role as penetrator was the prerogative of the adult, free male. In conjunction with this idea about sexuality, the piercing of flesh through violence was dreaded by men, because it was considered womanish and passive. Nicole Loraux, in a study of female death in Greek drama, identifies the throat as "women's weak point" in Greek literature. Death by the throat invoked sacrifice and highlighted the heroine's beauty.[147] The image of a woman being penetrated by a sword could carry sexual connotations, as *gladius* was a

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[145] Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 59.

[146] Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, 18.

[147] Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 50–53.

common euphemism for the penis.[148] Perpetua screams out in pain when the gladiator misses his mark. The gladiator's inability to perform this masculine act of penetration shames him. Once again Perpetua stands face to face with a gladiator, just as she did in the vision. But this time she does not wrestle him to the ground. Rather, she takes his trembling hand and guides the sword to her especially vulnerable place, the neck. Although she supersedes the gladiator in masculinity, she dies as a woman.[149]

Involuntary nakedness is a common feature in accounts of female martyrs. Margaret Miles interprets this as a sign of the male authors' confusion between "respect and esteem for woman martyrs" and "textual interest in their bodies or concern to establish the inferiority of their sex."[150] Similarly, Castelli detects ambivalence in the narrator of the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, who "places the reader in the role of voyeuristic spectator" and is "at once repelled and drawn to the sight."[151] But the attraction and the disgust may not be equally divided between Perpetua and Felicitas. Perpetua is described as beautiful (*delicata*, 20.2) and thus seems to be sexualized in her nakedness. Felicitas has milk dripping from her breasts—a reproductive rather than a sexual image. It may be Felicitas' bodily state that breaks with the audience's expectations and provokes their disgust. She is the one who most resembles the cow they fight against.[152] Perpetua's death seems terrible but beautiful; tragic but still, perhaps, somewhat sexy. She oscillates between the vulnerable and the courageous. Perpetua's body is hair, thighs and a delicate neck. Felicitas' body is breasts and womb; milk and blood. Perpetua is described as beautiful and young, while Felicitas bears all the signs of a post-partum woman. On the one hand, Perpetua's suffering is described in agonistic terms and is thus masculine but still eroticized. On the other, Felicitas' pain in childbearing and her messy bodily state in the arena highlight the effeminate and slavish component of endurance and passive suffering.

As I noted above, Perpetua's masculinity is used as a shaming device to effeminize and ridicule the martyrs' opponents—the Roman authorities and, ultimately, the Emperor. But there may be something else at stake here, too. Perpetua's masculinity may also be understood as an "interpretive veil"

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148 J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 20–21.

149 Streete, *Redeemed Bodies. Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*, 42.

150 Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, 57.

151 Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making*, 123.

152 Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 330.

to protect the loss of honor that a *damnatio ad bestias* entailed.[153] From a Roman perspective, Perpetua's imprisonment would be a shift downwards in status—from a woman of respectable family to a condemned criminal. This shift is reinterpreted in the narrative as allegiance to a higher authority than the Emperor's, as an inclusion in a new family and as a gender transformation. Perpetua shows neglect of the *matrona*'s duty as mother and wife when she turns her back on her father and her baby. However, she is still submissive to her true *paterfamilias*—God—and still a respectable matron through her marriage to Christ. Perpetua's transgender performance can be understood as an interpretive veil, protecting her honor. The arena vision has prepared the reader to see Perpetua's exposure in the arena as a manly fist-fight rather than as a naked woman attacked by a cow. The *Martyrdom* thus reinterprets but also re-establishes social status, by subverting the meanings of empire, family and gender.[154] In this Christian interpretation, what the Roman spectators might see as shameful and degrading nakedness is understood as a woman achieving the male virtues of courage, self-mastery and heroic action. Felicitas is not depicted as taking precautions to cover her body, nor does she have any ecstatic experience. Rather, attention is given to her post-partum, leaking body. As a female slave, her body always already belongs to the shameful and exposed.[155] There is thus no need to rescue or negotiate its shameful state.

I have argued that while Perpetua is both masculinized and portrayed as an ideal Roman matron, Felicitas' female and slavish qualities are highlighted. These very different symbolic roles that Perpetua and Felicitas play in the text can best be explained by the differences in their social status. Perpetua's suffering is portrayed as agonistic masculinity; Felicitas' martyrdom is likened to the endurance of childbirth. Ultimately, at the point of death, Perpetua and Felicitas join hands. For a brief moment they seem to be standing next to each other as equals: both dressed in the same fashion, sharing in their suffering in the arena (20.6). But even in death Perpetua supersedes Felicitas by taking an active role in her own execution, guiding the sword to her throat. Perpetua emerges as actively choosing death, while Felicitas succumbs to violence and penetration by the sword without resistance. She serves as an anchor for female roles of passivity, endurance and childbearing—even in the harshest of circumstances. As

153 See Solevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas—Reinterpreting Empire, Family and Gender."
154 Solevåg, "Perpetua and Felicitas—Reinterpreting Empire, Family and Gender," 283.
155 Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 27.

Glancy also argues, the *Martyrdom* does not dissolve, but "reinforces the distinctions of habitus" between freeborn woman and slave.[156]

Salvation and Childbearing in the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas

What is the connection between childbearing and salvation in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*? In this narrative, salvation is intimately linked to martyrdom. Expected gender roles clash with the consequence of Christian confession. Poised between childbearing and martyrdom, motherhood and salvation, the two women draw out the dilemma. But in this narrative, historical events correspond to cosmic realities, and there is a connection between salvation and childbearing in the heavenly realm too.

Martyrdom or Motherhood?

In the treatise *Flight in Persecution*, Tertullian contrasts death in childbirth to the glorious death of martyrdom:

> Why should you be ashamed of gaining glory? The opportunity is given you when you are before the eyes of men. So also elsewhere: seek not to die on bridal beds, nor in miscarriages, nor in soft fevers, but to die the martyr's death, that He may be glorified who has suffered for you. (*Fug*. 9)

The text is not directed to women in particular, but to all who contemplate running away in the face of persecution.[157] By his references to bridal beds and miscarriages, Tertullian feminizes death by natural causes. He also devalues women's death in childbirth, which he finds less glorious than the martyr's death. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Felicitas survives childbirth in order to be able to fight in the arena. She goes "from the midwife to the gladiator" (18.3). Although the two women are differently portrayed in the narrative, they are both poised between childbearing and martyrdom, motherhood and salvation. Like Tertullian, this text also values martyrdom death, with its guarantee of salvation, above the earthly role of mother. Odd Magne Bakke has noted that the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* makes clear that "those mothers who remain steadfast and accept death for the sake of their faith have made the right choice."[158]

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156 Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 59.
157 It is addressed to "my brother Fabius" (*Fug*. 1).
158 Bakke, *When Children Became People. The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, 276.

Motherhood is not "bad" in this narrative. The highly valued female role of mother is reflected in the description of Perpetua as a good mother, and readers are assured that the babies are taken care of after their mothers' deaths. It is only when by tragic circumstance motherhood and Christian confession are pitted against each other, that motherhood is left behind. What are the consequences of this evaluation of salvation above motherhood? What does it say about the value of the maternal body?

Perkins has agued that motherhood mattered in the second- and third-century debates about bodily resurrection. In view of the Greco-Roman elitist ideology that viewed the body as a material encumbrance and looked down upon people associated with their bodies, "the Christian valorization of the body was a startling move."[159] Perkins shows that Tertullian re-values the maternal body and its processes of birth and lactation when he argues for the physical reality of Christ's incarnation. She places the *Martyrdom* in the context of the argument between Tertullian and Marcion on the incarnation: "the *Passion* functions to enact the merit of even the culturally most material and squalid of bodies, the maternal body." For Tertullian, the insistence on Christ's incarnation was important because it functioned to sustain his argument about the resurrection of the flesh for all believers.

As I have pointed out, fleshly resurrection does not seem to be especially important in the *Martyrdom*. Thus, the maternal body may have a different function here than for Tertullian. If there is such a valorization of the maternal body in the *Martyrdom*, it is still marked by the Greco-Roman ideology that distributed unequal worth to bodies of differing status. Felicitas' body is affirmed as worthy of salvation, but still portrayed differently from Perpetua's body. The maternal body of Felicitas, does, however, embody Christ. When Felicitas says that Christ will be inside her and suffer for her (15.6), Christ ambiguously oscillates between fetus and parturient mother. More importantly, there is in this passage an identity inversion between Christ and Felicitas that hints at a wider meaning of motherhood in the narrative. Motherhood is not only a mother's care for her infant, but extends beyond these individual concerns, and becomes a divinely sanctioned, communally shared motherhood. Hence, Perpetua's maternal concern is extended beyond care for her own baby to include prayers for her dead brother. Motherhood is the Christian community's care and sustenance. Burrus has noted

[159] For this and the following quotations: Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 317–325.

that the Dinocrates visions have "echoes of breastfeeding themes."[160] The dragon vision, as well as the Dinocrates visions, transfers the breasts' ability to quench an infant's thirst to a heavenly scenario. This imagery is similar to the maternal rhetoric of the Augustan moral reform. Just as the Ara Pacis proclaimed the fecundity of the Roman Empire, the *Martyrdom* displays the fecundity of the believing community. By their witness the martyrs generate new believers, their death is seed. Two childbearing women are well suited to represent this young and fecund community. The children they leave behind serve as a promise that the life of the church will continue even in the face of persecution.

God's Transgender Performances

Interestingly, the picture painted of God in the *Martyrdom* crosses gender boundaries—God seems to have both male and female attributes. Three times we encounter a godly figure in the visions that all seem to have male characteristics. In Perpetua's first vision, she meets a "grey-haired man" dressed as a shepherd (*hominem canum in habitu pastoris*, 4.8); in the fourth vision, she sees a man (*uir*) who is taller than the top of the amphitheatre and is dressed like a gladiatorial trainer (*quasi lanista*, 10.8); in Saturus' vision, they see an "aged man with white hair and youthful face" enthroned and surrounded by elders chanting "holy, holy, holy" (12.4–6). When God is seen in the visions, then, he certainly *looks* like a man: God is shepherd, king and *lanista*.[161] But when God's actions are described—throughout the narrative, not only in the visions—the divine seems also to have female attributes. The narrative seems to suggest that God is capable of both birthing and nursing.

Felicitas' death as a martyr is likened to her recent childbirth, and she states herself that Christ will suffer in and with her when she struggles with death in the arena. There is thus an analogy between a woman's delivery, Christ's redemptive death and martyrs' suffering in the arena. There are at least two commonalities among these images that are drawn upon here: pain and life. As I noted in Chapter Two, childbearing imagery was used to exemplify extreme suffering, for example in the New Testament. But birth is also a life-giving process. The martyrs' day of death was called their *dies*

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160 Burrus, "Torture and Travail: Producing the Christian Martyr," 67.

161 Perhaps each represents one of the persons of the Godhead: The shepherd is Christ, the grey-haired man on the throne is the Father, and the trainer is the Holy Spirit.

natalis, the day they were brought forth into eternal life. When the martyrs march into the arena, the narrator comments that Felicitas went "from the midwife to the gladiator." The image of the *retiarius* as *obstetrix* clearly connects the idea of childbearing with martyrdom. The gladiator serves the role of the midwife; he is the helper as the martyrs are being born into eternal life. But who is the birthing mother? Felicitas' childbearing parallels her own suffering in the arena, but also the suffering that Christ has already undergone on the cross. That Christ will be inside her and suffer for her (*in me qui patietur pro me*, 15.6) recalls what Perpetua was promised in her arena vision by a deacon: "I am here, struggling (*conlaboro*) with you" (10.4). In these images, God, through Christ, is able to suffer, and to bring forth the martyrs into new life through this suffering. God labors and gives birth, just like a woman in childbirth.

This birthing God, moreover, also has the ability to nurture. In Perpetua's first vision she sees a figure who is wearing a shepherd's outfit and milking sheep:

> He called me over to him and gave me, as it were, a mouthful of the milk he was drawing [*caseo quod mulgebat*]; and I took it into my cupped hands and consumed it [*manducaui*]. And all those who stood around said: 'Amen!' At the sound of this word I came to, with the taste of something sweet still in my mouth [*commanducans adhuc dulce nescio quid*]. (4.9)

The heavenly food she consumes comes directly from the sheep being milked. Although *caseus* means cheese, and *manduco* and *commanduco* both refer to chewing,[162] I think Musurillo catches the sentiment by his translation. She takes it in with cupped hands, and it tastes sweet, which point towards the consumption of milk rather than cheese. Perpetua has this vision while she has her baby with her in prison, nursing him. Waking up with the sweet taste in her mouth echoes the experience of a baby who has fallen asleep at the breast.[163] The image shows God's ability to feed and sustain his children and represents God "in terms that specifically recall the female body and its modality."[164] The vision thus makes a connection between breastfeeding and the nurturing aspects of God's concern for his (or her?) children. The abundantly filled pool of water from which Dinocrates drinks also shows that God has the ability to slake the thirst of his children.

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[162] See OLD.

[163] Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, 48.

[164] Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," 327.

To use feminine and maternal imagery for the divine is quite unusual in early Christian discourse, but it is not completely unknown.[165] Denise Kimber Buell has shown how Clement of Alexandria uses the female body and its ability to bear children and nurture them in order to explain the relationship between the divine and Christians.[166] She contends, however, that when women's pregnant, birthing and lactating bodies serve as a basis for a theological argument, these bodies are devalued in comparison to their spiritual analogies.[167] The *Martyrdom* also appropriates maternal characteristics for the divine, but does it devalue a woman's ability to bear children and nurse? I would rather say that it relativizes it. The two women's ability to bear children and breastfeed is used in the *Martyrdom* to say something about God and his capacity to suffer and give life, to nurture and comfort. The very fact that such imagery was extremely unusual is perhaps a hint that it had subversive potential. Just as some early readers of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* used Thecla's self-baptism (*Acts Paul*, 34) to argue that women as well as men could perform baptism,[168] the idea that God has female as well as male characteristics holds the potential to widen a narrow androcentric frame of what it means to say that humans are shaped in the image of God.[169]

God's ability to give life and nurture is connected in the *Martyrdom* to the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. The ritual of baptism is often linked to birth in early Christian discourse.[170] Baptism signalled "a death to one's past and a rebirth to a new life."[171] In John 3:5 Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born "from above," and this passage became "the favorite

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165 Buell, "Ambiguous Legacy: A Feminist Commentary on Clement of Alexandria's Works," 54.

166 Buell, "Ambiguous Legacy: A Feminist Commentary on Clement of Alexandria's Works," 26. See also Buell, *Making Christians. Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy*.

167 Buell, *Making Christians. Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy*, 161.

168 As evidenced in Tertullian's critique of the practice: "But if the writings which wrongly go under Paul's name, claim Thecla's example as a license for women's teaching and baptizing, let them know that, in Asia, the presbyter who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from his own store, after being convicted, and confessing that he had done it from love of Paul, was removed from his office. For how credible would it seem, that he who has not permitted a *woman* even to *learn* with over-boldness, should give a *female* the power of *teaching* and of *baptizing*!" (*On Baptism* 17, emphasis in English translation).

169 See Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "God's Image, Man's Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen 1:27 and 1 Cor 11:7," in *The Image of God. Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995).

170 Jensen, "*Mater Ecclesia* and *Fons Aeterna*: The Church and her Womb in Ancient Christian Tradition."; Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, 35–36.

171 Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs. The Thought World of Early Christians*, 188.

baptismal text of the early church."[172] Robin Jensen has traced the image of the church as birthing mother in the baptismal ritual from the second century onwards. She particularly focuses on liturgical and material evidence that depicts baptism as a ritualized act of rebirth from the church's womb—the baptismal font.[173] The ritual of baptism also figures in the *Martyrdom*: Perpetua is baptized early in the narrative (3.5), and martyrdom is explicitly likened to a second baptism (18.3; 21.2). Morever, the water in the Dinocrates visions (7.7; 8.3–4), the kiss of peace in Saturus' vision (12.6), and the cries from the mob in the arena ("*salvum lotum*," 21.2) all have connotations to baptism.[174] Likewise, the anointing with oil in the arena vision (10.7) echoes the ritual of anointing the newly baptized with oil after immersion into the water.[175] The two women's nakedness in the arena could recall the fact that in the ritual of baptism the catechumens were stripped naked before they entered the water.[176]

There are also eucharistic echoes in the *Martyrdom*. In the early church, candidates were given a cup of milk at the baptismal eucharist.[177] The purported scriptural background for this practice is Paul's expression in 1Cor 3:2: "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food." The idea was that newly baptized Christians are newborn babes, not ready, as it were, for solid food.[178] It also alludes to the Old Testament idea of Canaan, the promised land, as the "land of milk and honey."[179] Perpetua's consumption of milk (or cheese) draws on this baptismal eucharist ritual. Her vision of being fed divine baby food occurs shortly after she is baptized. The crowd's cry of "amen" in the vision also follows the early Christian practice of the ceremony.[180]

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[172] See "Baptism" in Ferguson, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 163.

[173] Jensen, "*Mater Ecclesia* and *Fons Aeterna*: The Church and her Womb in Ancient Christian Tradition," 138.

[174] In a master thesis from the University of Oslo, Heggelund argues that the whole story symbolizes the different stages in the ritual of baptism and thus constitutes martyrdom as a baptism of blood. See Ane Heggelund, *Martyrium som bloddåp. Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis i lys av tidlig kristen inititiasjonspraksis* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2005).

[175] Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 263.

[176] Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, 33.

[177] Everett Ferguson, "Eucharist" in Ferguson, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 395.

[178] Miles, *Carnal Knowing. Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, 40.

[179] I am grateful to Brian McNeil for this suggestion. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, 181.

[180] Ferguson, "Eucharist" in Ferguson, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 395–396.

Both God and the church are thus connected to the female imagery of childbearing and breastfeeding in the *Martyrdom*. Later tradition divided the two ideas, and made the church, with her prototype, the virgin Mary, represent the female characteristics of birth and nurture.[181]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the class difference between Perpetua and Felicitas leads to a difference in how they are portrayed in the narative. Perpetua is depicted as an exemplary *matrona* while at the same time showing male characteristics, such as rhetorical skills and bravery. She has control over others as well as herself, and is active in seeking her own death. The childbearing body of Felicitas is used to exemplify suffering and endurance. Felicitas is submissive in her acceptance of everything that happens to her. In the arena, attention is paid to the women's naked bodies. Perpetua is beautiful, perhaps even eroticized, with loose hair, bare thighs and an exposed neck. Felicitas' body does not emerge as sexually attractive, but as a maternal body leaking milk and blood. Such descriptions reflect a class ideology that distributes both masculinity and beauty to the upper-class woman, whereas the slave woman represents carnal embodiment and passive endurance. By passively enduring suffering, however, Felicitas is linked to Christ's suffering as it is portrayed e.g. in Phil 2:7–8 and 1 Pet 2:18–23. Thus, the two women's similarly childbearing bodies are used for different symbolic purposes in the narrative. In a way, one could say that Perpetua and Felicitas are different but nevertheless similar: different in the level of masculine performance that their bodies are capable of; similar in that both their bodies have borne children and their breasts have produced milk. They also both leave their babies behind in their quest for the martyr's crown. Finally, their salvation is the same, since martyrdom grants both of them eternal life.

At the same time as their children are taken away from Perpetua and Felicitas, mothering characteristics are attributed to God. When the two martyrs can no longer function as earthly mothers, the categories of nursing and giving birth are reintroduced on a divine level, as cosmic functions of life-giving and nurture. Intertwined with this divine female imagery,

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[181] Jensen, "*Mater Ecclesia* and *Fons Aeterna*: The Church and her Womb in Ancient Christian Tradition," 138.

there are also echoes of "Mother Church" who births and nurtures through the sacramental functions of baptism and eucharist. Motherhood is thus reinterpreted in the *Martyrdom*, albeit still preserved as a positive symbol.

Ultimately, however, childbearing and motherhood are relativized. The two women share the fact that they have infant children who are taken away from them when they opt for martyrdom death in the arena. The *Martyrdom* expects of a young mother who wants to assume the name of Christian that she is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice—to leave a newborn baby behind—whether she be slave or free. If she is put to the test, the confession "*christiana sum*" is expected, even if it costs the life of a suckling infant. Martyrdom is shown as more desirable than childbirth and motherhood, because it ensures the confessor's salvation. In the economy of salvation elaborated by this narrative, there is thus a hierarchy of priorities, based on the notion that martyrdom is meritorious in a way that childbearing is not. Rather than giving value to the female body, such a soteriology in my opinion relativizes the childbearing body in the quest for a non-carnal resurrection body.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The focus of this study has been the interface of childbearing and salvation in three early Christian texts. In the previous three chapters, I have discussed each text individually. Taken together, the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* reveal that what a Christian text says about salvation has some relation to its views about women as childbearers and mothers. In this last chapter I would like to draw some connections among the texts and point out some of the differences and similarities.

Before discussing the interconnections, let me summarize some of the main points in my analysis so far. In the Pastoral Epistles, women's place in the households and in the household of God, the *ekklesia*, is of central concern. Women are expected to behave according to Greco-Roman ideals about respectable, married women's conduct. They should be silent, submissive, dress conservatively and, above all, bear children. Childbearing is cast as woman's only way to salvation. I have argued that this soteriology is dependant on a specific reading of Gen 2–3 in which Eve is understood to have been sexually seduced by the devil and thus ending up in a worse state of transgression than Adam. According to the Pastorals, this transgression has implications for all women but can be overcome. God's curse on woman—bearing children in pain and living submissively under a husband—is also the way to redemption. Only free, married women, however, are envisioned in this soteriological economy, since slave women belong to the category of slaves rather than women (γυνή).

In the *Acts of Andrew* Greco-Roman discourses on childbearing are reflected in the imagery used to express conversion. Stratocles' "childbearing" reflects knowledge of the typical birthing room set-up as well as philosophical childbearing imagery. Women's role as childbearers is devalued in this text, as the male leader of the believing community becomes the (child)bearer of the *logoi*—the words of salvation. I have argued that the text seems less preoccupied with sexual renunciation for men than for upper-class women. The *Acts of Andrew* radically devalues actual childbearing for all believers—it is nothing to strive for. Only for Maximilla, however, is sexual renunciation a precondition for salvation. Whether this should be

understood as a soteriological economy which expects celibacy of all free women or, more narrowly, only of free women with non-believing husbands, remains uncertain. The place of slaves in the soteriological economy of the *Acts of Andrew* is below free men and women. Salvation for slaves is dependent on submissive and faithful behavior.

In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, childbearing discourses are reflected in the depiction of Perpetua as a good mother who conforms to the ideal of breastfeeding her child, as well as in the depiction of Felicitas' birth, where pain and suffering is foregrounded. Childbearing is still "a woman's place" and the way Perpetua and Felicitas—both mothers—choose the martyr's crown above motherhood stresses the tremendous quality of their sacrifice. The mother's ability to give birth and nurture is, I suggest, transferred to a divine register, since Christ is cast as suffering in childbirth and God as feeding his children with heavenly milk. There is a hierarchy of values in which martyrdom stands above motherhood, because martyrdom ensures salvation, in the sense of eternal life. I have also argued that Perpetua and Felicitas are pictured quite differently, according to a class logic that distributes masculinity and beauty to the upper-class matron and femininity and passive suffering to the slave woman.

Salvation and Childbearing

Salvation is related to childbearing in different ways in these texts. Childbearing is woman's safest (if not only) way to salvation in the Pastorals, whereas sexual renunciation is the only way for Maximilla to achieve salvation. The respective routes to salvation in the Pastorals and the *Acts of Andrew* seem to point in opposite directions. Interestingly, both these texts target the *free woman* in their concerns about childbearing. In both texts, it is unclear whether salvation has anything to do with childbearing in the case of free men, slave men or slave women. In the *Martyrdom*, childbearing has soteriological implications only when it is challenged by martyrdom. Willingness to die for one's Christian confession is salvific and must be chosen in preference to childbearing and motherhood. It should not be surprising that in the narrative it is two *female* martyrs that draw out the hierarchy of values concerning childbearing and salvation.

The sustained attention to the interconnections between salvation and childbearing has revealed that at least two of these texts operate with a gendered and slave-related taxonomy in relation to salvation. In the Pastorals, the *oikos* ideology constructs a community that seems dependent on both

women's childbearing and a kyriarchally organized leadership with a male chain of command. In the *Acts of Andrew*, the male "birthing" of the word is depicted as productive in a way that female sexual renunciation is not. In both texts, then, there is a hierarchy in which male authority and control of the word are important, and free women must display with their (childbearing or chaste) bodies that they are "en route" to salvation. In both texts, slaves should be quiet and subordinate, and their salvation seems to be dependent on good slave behavior.

In the *Martyrdom*, however, there is no distribution between different routes. There is no difference between male or female, slave or free, because confession and martyrdom must be chosen by all, and, if necessary, in preference to a life of childbearing. However, a similar class and gender logic is in operation in the description of *how* the two women receive the martyrs' crown. I have argued that Perpetua transcends her gender in a way that Felicitas does not, and also that Perpetua's relation to her son is more movingly depicted, and thus, perhaps, her sacrifice in leaving the child behind is more impressive than Felicitas'.

Intersections of Gender and Class

It is quite apparent, then, that the exemplary female believer in each of these texts is free, rather than a slave. The texts are written from the perspective of slave-holder rather than slave, and this perspective also affects the texts' soteriologies. Female slaves and unmarried women fall outside the Pastorals' scope, and their place in the soteriological economy is unclear. Slave women do receive attention in the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. In the *Acts*, slaves are negatively portrayed as slanderers and betrayers of family secrets. A slave woman's salvation is dependent on her submissive and obedient behavior, rather than on sexual renuciation. In the *Martyrdom*, the slave woman's feminine suffering is portrayed as a "backdrop" to Perpetua's trans-gender performance.

In the *Acts* as well as in the *Martyrdom*, honorary masculinity is bestowed only on upper-class women. Although "becoming male" works as a *soteriological* metaphor only in the *Acts*, it is interesting that both Maximilla and Perpetua, the upper-class heroines, are portrayed as "becoming male." They are both also cast as Eve victorious and the bride of Christ. These exemplary roles seem to be preserved for the free, affluent woman. In the *Martyrdom*, Felicitas is portrayed as suffering in a distinctly feminine way; she is less male than Perpetua. She is, however, a slave who talks back. Contrary to

the exhortations in Tit 2:9 (μὴ ἀντιλέγοντας), she answers defiantly when the prison guard chastises her, and in her answer she draws connections between Christ's suffering and her own.

Masculinity and Gender Models

The so-called protocols of masculinity play an interesting role in Greco-Roman gender discourse. I have argued that these protocols are reflected in the three texts. When compared, the picture of the ideal man in each of the texts is somewhat different. In the Pastoral Epistles, the householder is the prime example of the ideal man. Perhaps we can call this "householder masculinity," where control over others, in one's own family as well as in the family of God, is essential. In the *Acts of Andrew*, it is the philosopher apostle who exhibits superior masculinity. This "philosopher masculinity" is expressed mainly through control over self, through virtuous behavior and through insight into the true organisation of the world. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, I have suggested that the emphasis is on spectacle and contest, where superior masculinity is won in rhetorical debates and the gladiatorial battle. Perpetua, an upper-class woman martyr, is the main example of this "agonistic masculinity," but the other male martyrs also feature a combination of rhetorical power (see e.g. 17.1–3; 18.7–9; 21.4) and *virtus* in bodily spectacle (see 19.1–6; 21.1–3; 8).

The constructions of gender also differ among the texts. The Pastorals are particularly concerned with constructing masculinity by a *distinction* between male and female roles. Such a gender construction based on distinction is different from the constructions of gender in the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, where at least some women can "become male." Perpetua becomes the primary exhibitor of the *Martyrdom*'s agonistic masculinity. She is a woman who can fight and display courage, as well as have control of her emotions. Her masculinity serves as a shaming device that ridicules her opponents (father, Roman authorities). Similarly, Maximilla in the *Acts of Andrew* is called a "wise man" because of her ascetic practice and philosophical insight. In the Pastorals, on the other hand, there is no room for the idea that women can "become male" in any sense—honorary masculinity cannot be achieved by women. Men, however, can slip and become effeminate when they deviate from the sound doctrine. Men who have deviated from the sound doctrine are accused of having feminine characteristics, their speech is like "old wives' tales" (1Tim 4:7). In terms of Thomas Laqueur's one-sex model, men can slide

on the continuum towards femininity, but there are no examples of women moving towards masculinity in the Pastorals.

The two narratives, then, have more fluid gender boundaries than the Pastoral Epistles. Not only can women "become male," but female characteristics such as pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding are used figuratively and integrated into a discourse of masculinity. In the *Acts of Andrew*, men are cast as childbearers and midwives. Childbearing discourse is used to represent the life-giving potential of God's "saving words"—a life-giving potential that male believers, not female, hold. In the *Martyrdom* it is God, the Father of all, who has the birthing and nurturing characteristics of the female body. In both these texts, some form of rejection of children is expected of a woman who "becomes male." In the choice of sexual renunciation as well as the choice of martyrdom, childbearing and motherhood must be left behind. In both of these texts, childbearing is "allegorized" and usurped by men or the male God. In the Pastorals, on the contrary, women should not give up, but should completely submit to, their feminine role of childbearing.

Exemplary Women

As noted in Chapter One, the *Acts of Andrew* and the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* have been regarded by earlier feminist scholarship as less patriarchal than the Pastorals, whereas more recent research has questioned this distinction. My interpretation of the texts also breaks down this distinction and shows that ascetic does not necessarily mean proto-feminist, nor does procreative mean patriarchal.

I have argued that the Pastorals allows for a limited teaching role for women. As long as it is in conformity with *oikos* ideology and sound doctrine, women can be teachers of what is good (καλοδιδάσκαλος, Tit 2:3). I have suggested that this means that they can teach other women, as well as slaves and children of both sexes. Older women are given a place of esteem in these letters (see e.g. 1 Tim 5:2–3; 9–10; 2 Tim 1:5; Tit 2:3). In comparison, the *Acts of Andrew* seems less interested in women as anything other than listeners and symbols of chastity. Maximilla does not speak, but remains silent, in contrast to Stratocles, who speaks words of salvation. Perpetua, however, is not silent. She is a bold witness who persuades non-believers and strengthens fellow Christians. Her extraordinary place as a bold witness is, as I have argued, somewhat compromised by the way she is depicted in the heavenly visions, as accompanied by her male co-martyr Saturus. I have noted an

ambivalence in the text about depicting her as bold and masculine; her feminized death too is an example of this.

Another argument for the blurring of the boundaries between "proto-feminist" and patriarchal texts, is that the *Acts of Andrew* and the Pastorals employ overlapping vocabulary of female virtues. Maximilla is called ἁγνή (39; 40), καθαρά, (14; 40) and σώφρων (14). These adjectives are also used in the Pastoral Epistles. Καθαρός is not used explicitly about women, but believers in general are called pure: "To the pure [καθαροῖς] all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure" (Tit 1:15). The older women in Tit 2:5 are encouraged to be σώφρονας ἁγνὰς. Moreover, σωφροσύνη is the female virtue framing the instructions to women in 1 Tim 2:9–15. One could easily imagine Andrew speaking the words of 1 Tim 2:9–14 to Maximilla, although his conclusion would be rather different from the Pastor's in v. 15. Hence, adjectives such as ἁγνή, καθαρά and σώφρων were not used only in ascetic Christian texts. Rather, they seem to be used more generally as a means of showing off Christian women's moral superiority, whether through sexual renunciation or wifely subordination. Christianity does not break with Greco-Roman sexual mores, but constructs an intensified version of it ("whatever the pagans can do, Christians can do better").

Women, Eve, Sex

Gen 2–3 plays an important role in all three texts' ideas about salvation. Eve is explicitly referred to in the Pastoral Epistles as the one who was deceived, whereas Adam was not deceived (1 Tim 2:13–14). In the *Acts of Andrew*, an Adam-Eve typology is used to argue that each person can correct "the fall" (37; 39). In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, we hear echoes of the story of the Garden of Eden in Perpetua's visionary encounters with the *draco*, the snake at the bottom of the ladder, as well as in her trampling on the head of the Eyptian. Moreover, Felicitas' painful delivery seems to play on the God-ordained suffering in childbirth (Gen 3:16).

There is no doubt that the story of the creation and fall of humankind from Genesis was an important text to early Christians. As is clear from our texts, many Christian writers saw some connection between Eve and womankind. Tertullian is another example:

> And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway: *you* are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: *you* are the first deserter of the divine law: *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil

> was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.
> (*Cult. fem.* 1.1.1–2, emphases in the English translation)

To Tertullian's mind, woman is the weak link. She has caused the fall by succumbing to the devil, and hence it is because of her that Christ had to come, suffer and die. Every woman bears the shame of Eve's misbehavior.

In the Pastorals, a similar logic seems to be at work. Eve was a secondary creation, and she was easily deceived (1 Tim 2:13–14). She transgressed in a way that Adam did not; sexually seduced, as I have suggested. By analogy, women are sexually culpable and must deal with the consequences: silence and submission under husband and men in authority. They will, however, be saved through the bearing of children. In the *Acts of Andrew*, woman is also gullible. Too much feeling or passion (πάσχω, 37) brought the first woman to fall. But everyone can correct his or her fall by recognizing or understanding (γνωρίζω, 37) the truths about life and death that Andrew preaches. Because Maximilla has this knowledge, she becomes a new, restored Eve. She understands where Eve was mistaken; she obeys and does not experience passion. The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* also seems to rewrite the Genesis story, or, rather, add a new chapter to the story of deviation and fall. Perpetua represents a victorious, new Eve as she fights and wins over the devil in her martyrdom, thus predicting victory in the endless fight between humans and the devil (Gen 3:15). Felicitas exemplifies women's lot of pain in childbirth (Gen 3:16), at the same time as she transcends the childbearing role in her choice of martyrdom.

Birthing Salvation

In this book, I have tried to locate the interface of salvation and childbearing in three early Christian texts. I have found three quite different ways of configuring procreation and soteriology. The same designation, "Birthing salvation," may, however, be used on all three.

In the Pastorals, women are encouraged to birth their own salvation. Through τεκνογονία—the bearing of children—Christian women ensure their salvation. The act of birthing is part of God's punishment of Eve and thus all women, but it is also part of the redemption, through which women who remain in "faith and love and holiness, with modesty" will be saved.

In the *Acts of Andrew*, on the contrary, it is the *male* believer's responsibility to birth salvation. The new leader of the community, Stratocles, gives birth to the "saving words" on which the whole community depends in order

to be saved. These words have been implanted in him through the apostle Andrew's preaching—typified as a homoerotic begetting in Platonic fashion.

Finally, in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the birthing woman is represented in Felicitas. She is not, however, birthing salvation. But the image she draws of Christ, who will suffer with her as she struggles with death in the arena, is an image of Christ birthing salvation in/for the martyrs. Just as Christ suffered on the cross and through his suffering earned life for those who believe in him, so will he yet again suffer together with the martyrs in the arena. And like a birthing woman brings her offspring to life, Christ will birth salvation and eternal life for the martyrs.

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INDEX OF ANCIENT SOURCES

1. Hebrew Bible

Genesis
1:26–27 189
2–3 4–5, 44, 49, 123, 148, 212, 249
2:4–3:24 45
2:7 124
2:8–9 124
2:9 213
2:19 124
2:21–22 124
3 3, 124, 133, 147, 159
3:3 185
3:6 127
3:13 124
3:14 213
3:15 213, 255
3:16 4, 46, 130, 213, 254–255
3:16a 124
3:16b 124
3:17 124–125
3:19 185
3:20 46n12, 124

2 Kings
9:35–37 194n183

Joel
2:28–29 202, 231
2:29 232

2. New Testament

Matthew
8:5–13 54
19:28 93
22:1–14 65
25:1–13 65
24:8 80

Mark
13:8 80
16:16 1

Luke
19:10 1
20:27–36 63

John
3 81
3:3–8 93
3:5 245–246
3:17 1
3:29–30 65
4:46–53 54
16:21 175
16:21–22 80
19:34 81–82

Acts
2:17–18 202, 231
2:18 232, 232n123
4:12 1
18:2 105n78
18:18 105n78
18:26 105, 105n78

Romans
5:9–10 1
8:22–23 81
8:22–25 175
10:9 1
12:1 98
16:3 105n78

1 Corinthians
3:2 81, 246

1 Corinthians (*cont.*)
7 62
10:16–18 98
11–14 123
11:8–9 124
12:12–27 98
14 123
14:33–35 122
14:33–36 15n21
14:34 122
14:34 ff. 122n131
14:34–35 123n133
14:35 122
2:17–18 202
16:19 105n78

2 Corinthians
11:2 65
11:2 ff. 128
11:2–3 125–126
11:3 181–182

Galatians
3:28 13, 22, 24
4:19 81, 175

Ephesians
5:21–33 65
5:22–24 120
5:22–6:9 50

Philippians
2:7–8 233, 247
3:20 92n32

Colossians
3:18 120
3:18–4:1 50

1 Thessalonians
5:3 80

1 Timothy
1:1 87, 92, 113
1:2 96, 106
1:3 86, 113
1:3–7 90
1:4 90, 97, 100, 113, 179
1:5 86, 94
1:8–10 95
1:10 86, 94, 112
1:12 96
1:15 87, 92, 129
1:17 92
1:18 107, 109, 113
1:20 107
2 113, 123
2:1 113, 120
2:1–2 113
2:2 96, 114
2:3 87, 92
2:3–4 129
2:3–7 113
2:4 92
2:7 107–108
2:8 99, 108, 114–115, 115n, 122, 131–132
2:8–15 50, 98
2:8–3:1a 8, 114n103, 114n105
2:9 115, 118, 131
2:9–10 115–119, 131
2:9–12 127
2:9–14 254
2:9–15 99–100, 110, 120, 122, 131, 132n169, 254
2:9–3:1a 113
2:10 86, 94–95, 123
2:11 130
2:11–12 11, 15n21, 104, 106, 118–124, 131
2:11–14 103
2:11–15 15n21, 119
2:11b 114n105
2:12 120n125
2:13 126
2:13–14 2, 95, 123–128, 134, 254–255
2:13–15 125
2:14 88n17, 103, 124, 181
2:14b 127, 129, 131
2:15 1, 2, 50, 85, 87, 88, 88n17, 89, 91, 92, 102, 112–113, 115, 118–119, 124, 129, 131, 135, 254
2:15b 88, 104n76, 131n166
2:15–3:1a 129–132
3 113
3:1 86, 87, 92–94
3:1a 132
3:1b–3:7 114
3:2 97, 103, 108
3:3 108
3:4 96, 106, 120, 130
3:5 97

3:6 105, 127
3:7 105, 127
3:8–13 100–101, 114
3:11 99–100, 102, 105, 122, 127
3:11–12 110
3:12 96–97, 99, 102–103, 108, 130
3:14–15 96, 114
3:14–16 114
3:15 96
4:3 90, 97, 105
4:7 18, 105, 109, 252
4:8 92
4:9 87
4:10 87, 92
4:16 9–95, 107, 133
5 130
5:1–2 96
5:1–15 101
5:1–6:6 96
5:2 108
5:2–3 253
5:2–16 99
5:3 101
5:3–5 99
5:3–16 16, 122
5:8 99
5:9 97, 110
5:9–10 101, 253
5:9–14 120
5:10 86, 94–95, 130
5:11 105
5:11–13 105
5:13 105
5:13–15 97
5:14 2, 101–102, 105, 110–111, 130, 132, 134
5:17 107
5:18 95
5:25 86, 94
6:1 106
6:1–2 23, 50, 96, 98, 110
6:2 107
6:3 86, 90, 94, 96
6:3–4 95
6:3–5 108
6:11–12 109
6:12 109
6:17 92
6:18 86, 94
6:20 95

2 Timothy
1:2 106
1:5 104, 121–122, 133, 253
1:9 87, 93
1:10 92
1:12 95
1:13 86, 94
1:14 95
1:18 90
2:1 106
2:1–5 110
2:2 95
2:5 109
2:7 96
2:10 109
2:10–11 93
2:11 87
2:11 ff. 122n131
2:18 93
2:20–21 111
2:21 86, 94–96
2:25 107
2.26 90, 105, 127
3:6 90, 97
3:6–7 105
3:8 90
3:8–9 95
3:15 93, 95, 104, 122–123
3:15–16 133
3:16 95, 107n85
3:17 86, 94–95
4 109
4:2 107, 107n85
4:3 86, 94
4:4 90
4:8 109
4:7 109
4:18 92
4:19 104
4:21 104
4:22 96

Titus
1:3 92
1:3–4 87
1:4 92, 106
1:6 96–97, 103, 106, 108, 120
1:7 96, 108
1:8 108
1:9 86, 94, 107–108

Titus (*cont.*)
1:10 90
1:11 90, 97
1:14 90
1:15 254
1:15–16 90
1:16 86, 94
2:1 86, 94
2:1–10 50, 96, 98
2:2–10 96
2:3 103, 121, 127, 253
2:3–5 101, 122
2:4–5 130
2:5 102, 110–111, 130, 254
2:7 86, 94
2:9 96, 106, 120, 252
2:9–10 23, 111
2:10 87, 92
2:11–12 107
2:11–14 94
2:12 107
2:13 92
2:14 86, 94, 96
2:15 107
3:1 86, 94–95
3:2 96, 105
3:3 93–94
3:3–7 93
3:4 92
3:4–7 94
3:5 7, 82, 93
3:6 92
3:7 92, 94, 96
3:8 86, 87, 94
3:9 90
3:10–11 95
3:14 86, 94

Hebrews
5:12–13 81

1 Peter
2:2 81
2:18–23 247
2:18–3:7 50
2:19 233
2:21–23 233
3:1 120
3:1–4 117
3:1–6 161n89

Revelation
2:20–23a 194
2:23 194n184

3. Ancient Jewish Writings

2 Enoch
30:16 46
31:6 125

2 Maccabees
7:4 192n170

4 Maccabees
7:20–23 160
8:2 160
10:19 192n170
18:7–8 125, 181

Genesis Rabbah
18 48n23

Life of Adam and Eve
7.1–2 47
9.2 47
10.2 47
14.2 47
19.1 47
19.2 47
19.3 47

Philo
Alleg. Interpr.
3.180 79n178
3.219 79n177
Cherubim
42–48 79n177
43–44 79
Contempl. Life
68 78
Creation
124 74n160
152 48
165 48
Spec. Laws
3.51 116

QG
1.33 47

Sirach
25:24 46

4. Greek and Roman Sources

Aeschylus
Eum.
658–660 51

Apuleius
Metamorphoses
9.14 161n91

Areius Didymus
Liber philosophicum sectis
76.1 130

Aristotle
Gen. an.
728 69
766 69
Hist. an.
582a 50, 130
584a 73
584b 73
585b 50
Pol.
1252a 100
1252a–1253a 52
1253b 50, 52, 111n97

Aulus Gellius
Attic Nights
12.1.17 62n98

Chariton
Callirhoe
3.2 50n27

Chrysippus
Fragmenta moralia
611 130

Digest
1.1.1.3 51
23.1.12 56n71

Galen
Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato
9.3.25–26 70
In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarii
3.49 130
On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body
14.2 70
14.3 72
14.6 70

Hesiod
Theogony
515 45
590–602 45
Works and Days
56 44
63 44
67 44
79 44
80 44
90–95 44

Hippocratic Writings
De carnibus
19 73
20.25–29 73
De octimestri partu
6–7 73n155
92.5–10 73n155
Diseases of Women 1
1.25 71
1.40 71
Nat. puer.
13.1 54
30.1–9 74
On generation
4 68

Homer
Oddysey
18.38 154n67
18.61 154n67
18.112 154n67
18.123 154n67
18.327 154n67
18.357 154n67
22 193n179

Hymn 3 to Apollo
323 76n169

Juvenal
6.592–601 60

Ovid
Amores
2.14 60

Plato
Menex.
238a 51n32
Phaedo
67d 145
68c 157
81e 158n79
82b–c 158n78
Symposium
206b 77, 171
206c–e 77
207a 77
207d 171
208d–e 171
208e–209a 171
209a 77
209c 77
209d 172
209e 172n119
210c–d 78
Theatetus
148e 76, 171
149a 76
150a–b 76
150b 76

Plutarch
Conj. Praec.
138c 188
138e 57
139b 164n102
140d 161
141e 116
142c 116
145d–e 80
146a 188n157
Cons. ux.
609e 217

Pseudo-Plutarch
The Education of Children
3e 62

Semonides
Females of the Species
12–20 192–193

Seneca
Helv.
16.3–4 60
16.5 60

Soranus
Gynecology
1.1 55n158
1.20 102
1.30 69
1.32 69
1.46 73
1.60 61
2.3 74
2.5 170
2.6 75, 237
2.17 75
2.18 75, 170
2.19 75
3.1 69
3.3 69
3.5 69
4.7 74n164

Suetonius
Augustus
34.2 59

Tacitus
Germania
20 62n98

Varro
De re rustica
1.17.1 111n87

Xenophon
Oec.
7.18–19 49

Xenophon of Ephesus
An Ephesian Tale
1.14.4–5 163

5. Early Christian Writings

1 Clement
6:1–4 161n89

Acts of Andrew
1 156
2 147, 151, 156, 166
2–4 166
3 154
4 152–153, 166
5 150, 151n57, 152, 166
6 161
6–7 152
7 154n67, 156, 169–170, 176, 188
7–8 156
7–9 3
8 143–144, 146, 156, 157, 175
9 144, 152, 169–170, 172, 176, 183
10 146–148, 161, 174
11 148, 153
12 154, 156
13 157–159, 162
14 158, 163, 165, 183–184, 186–187, 254
15 153, 162–163
15–16 178
16 2, 63, 65, 158, 161, 179, 183, 218n65
17 167, 178, 190
17–22 190–195
18 158–160, 167, 178, 190
19 146–147, 165
19–20 162, 178
20 162, 178
20–22 178
21 168, 183
21–22 168
22 167, 191–193
23 158, 161–162, 165, 167, 178
24 164
24–26 178
25 151, 151n57, 154, 156–157, 162, 167–168
26 153–155, 166n109, 168
27 163–164
28 162, 166, 178
28–29 164, 178
30–32 178
31 161–162
32 162
33 146–147, 165
34 165
35 158
36 151n57, 162, 164
37 2, 7, 63, 149, 162, 165, 180–181, 185, 187, 254–255
37–40 2
37–41 165
38 146
39 147, 180–181, 184–185, 188, 196, 254
40 146, 159, 182–185, 254
41 185–186
42 147, 172, 174, 176, 183
42–45 177
43 147n40, 174
43–44 156
44 144, 173–175, 196
46 144, 158, 188
47 147n40
50 147
52 156
51 151, 153–155
53 153, 156–157, 176
54 192n171
56 145, 149, 158, 192
57 149, 185
59 156
60 158
61 185
62 146, 158–159
63 146, 155, 185
64 158, 160, 164, 165, 176, 184, 188
65 144, 162

Acts of John
113 63n106
114–115 137n1

Acts of Paul and Thecla
2 150n54
5–6 150n52
6–7 63

Acts of Paul and Thecla (*cont.*)
7 150n53, 150n54
9 150n52
12 3, 150n52
14 3n6
15 150n54
20 63
20–21 150
23 150n54
25 148n44
34 245
40 150n53

Acts of Thomas
12 63, 65
96 63

Augustine
Confessions
3.4.8 104n75

Clement of Alexandria
Paed.
1.6.41 3n7
2.10.83–101 3n7
3.3 221

Exegesis on the Soul
127–134 4n8

Gospel of Philip
61:5–10 183

Gospel of Thomas
114 64

Gregory's Epitome
18 138
25 191

Ignatius
Rom.
6.2 209
Pol.
4–5 50

Justin Martyr
Dial.
100 182

Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas
1.1 215
1.4 202, 231, 233
1.5 202
1.6 214
2.1 205, 215, 231
2.1–3 215
2.3 200, 216
3.1 219
3.2 225
3.3 222
3.5 213, 224, 246
3.5–6 224
3.6 217
3.8 217
3.9 217
4.1 216, 226
4.2 226
4.3–7 211
4.4 212
4.5 226, 231
4.4–7 3
4.5–6 211
4.6 212–213
4.6–7 213
4.8 211, 243
4.9 222, 244
4.10 209
5.1–5 219
5.2 220
5.2–5 219–220
5.3 210
5.5 216, 220
6.2 219
6.4 225
6.5 220
6.7 217, 220
6.8 223
7.2 226
7.7 246
7.9 211
8.3–4 246
9.2 221
9.2–3 219
10.4 226, 244
10.6–7 227
10.7 246
10.7–11 3
10.8 213, 243
10.9 229
10.10 221
10.10–11 228–229
10.11 213
10.13 209, 213, 222, 229

10.14 209, 212, 222
11.2 211–212
11.4 210
11.7 211, 226
12.2–5 222
12.4–6 243
12.6 246
12.7 211–212
13.1–6 226
13.1–7 211
13.4 216
13.5 211
13.6 235
13.8 211–212
15 205
15.1 205, 233
15.2 205–306
15.5 74n160, 206
15.5–6 6, 205–206
15.6 213–214, 242, 244
15.7 233
16.2–3 225
16.3 210
16.4 214, 225
17.1 211, 234
17.1–3 235, 252
17.2 211
17.3 214, 225
18 65
18.1–3 236
18.2 210, 218, 222, 224
18.2–3 235
18.3 205–207, 210, 241, 246
18.5 225
18.6–7 225
18.7 213, 222
18.7–9 252
18.9 211, 214
19.1–6 252
20.1–5 236–237
20.1–6 203, 235
20.2 218, 233, 239
20.4 237
20.6 224, 240
20.8 238
20.10 215, 226, 226n101
21.1–3 252
21.1–4 226n101
21.2 246
21.2–3 210
21.4 252
21.7 235
21.7–9 235
21.7–10 238
21.8 252
21.8–9 216n54
21.9 225
21.10 225
21.11 215

Martyrdom of Polycarp
17 209

Protevangelium of James
13:3–5 126–127
13:5 181

Tertullian
Apology
38.4 235n138
50.13–16 214–215
The Apparel of Women
1.1.1–2 254–255
Flight in Persecution
1 241n157
9 241
Second Apology
12.1 215
The Shows
18.3 213
29.3–5 235
The Soul
37 74n160, 207n28
55 199, 211
To the Martyrs
3 210
5 210

INDEX OF SUBJECTS AND NAMES

abortion, 53–54, 60–61, 74, 87–88, 116
Adam, 8, 43–49, 82, 103, 123–127, 133, 148, 180–181, 184–185, 188, 193, 196, 211, 249, 254–255
Aegeates, 8, 25, 141–142, 144, 146, 150–151, 153–165, 166n109, 167–168, 172, 178–181, 183–187, 189–192, 192n171, 194n182, 196
Alcman, 141, 148, 151n57, 156, 165–166, 174–175, 195, 197
Andrew, 2–4, 7–8, 16, 137, 141–142, 144–189, 192n171, 194n182, 196–197, 254–256
arena, 3, 18, 152, 202–207, 209, 210, 212–213, 214, 217, 222, 224, 226, 227–229, 233, 235–241, 243–244, 246–248, 256
Aristotle, 49–50, 52, 57–58, 66–70, 72–73, 75, 100, 111n97, 130
ascetic, asceticism, 2, 15, 18, 21–24, 27, 62–65, 78, 89–91, 112, 128, 135, 141, 148, 149, 196, 223, 229, 252, 253–254
athlete, 108–110, 209, 227

baptism, 82, 93–94, 148, 206, 210, 210n41, 229, 236, 237n142, 245–246, 248
"become male," *see* masculinity
birth, birthing, 2, 3, 6, 8, 43, 45, 54–55, 69, 72–74, 87–88, 104, 111, 130, 137, 141, 144, 147, 169–173, 175–178, 188, 191, 196, 199, 204–208, 232–234, 242, 249–250
  birth imagery, 76–82, 169–173, 175–177, 240–241, 243–248, 251, 253
  "birthing salvation", 8, 9, 255–256
  see also childbearing, labor, parturition
Blandina (martyr), 232, 234n134
blood, 64, 67–69, 71–72, 82, 205, 210, 210n41, 214–215, 236, 239, 246n174, 247
breasts, 59, 71, 82, 204, 223, 233, 236–237, 239, 243, 247
breastfeed, 3, 61–62, 69, 81, 170, 199, 204, 233, 243–245, 247, 250, 253
  see also lactation, milk, nurse

celibacy, 21, 23, 51, 62, 63, 65, 150, 150n54, 181, 250
chastity, 21–24, 58, 63, 63n106, 78, 116, 132, 138, 141, 149–150, 165, 177, 186–187, 196–197, 223
  see also virginity
childbearing, 1–9, 16, 27, 29, 36, 41, 43–83, 85, 87–93, 97–98, 100–103, 112–135, 137, 140, 149–150, 168–197, 199, 200n9, 205–208, 230–236, 240–248, 249–256
  childbearer, 2, 80, 121, 130, 134, 173, 179, 186, 249, 253
  childbirth, 7, 51, 66, 68–69, 74, 88, 97–98, 129–132, 170, 206, 232–233, 240–241, 243–244, 248, 253
  see also birth, discourse, labor, parturition
children, 3, 5–6, 39, 43, 49–62, 65, 70, 75, 77–78, 83, 88, 96, 98–99, 101–104, 104n76, 107, 110–112, 130–131, 131n, 134–135, 149, 150n54, 154, 155, 162, 170–172, 199, 233, 243–245, 249, 250, 253
  legitimate children/heirs/offspring, 6, 43, 51, 53, 56, 58, 61, 102, 154, 170, 183, 219
class, 1, 5, 6, 8–9, 13, 19, 23–27, 31, 36–41, 85, 96, 99, 111, 112, 116, 143–145, 152, 189, 190, 196–197, 203, 208, 215–219, 231, 247, 250–251
  see also status
  class-egalitarian, 15, 24–26, 195
  class difference, 164n102, 189n164, 247
  upper-class, 3, 8, 23–25, 27, 40, 56, 57, 59, 61, 116, 150, 154n67, 155–156, 161, 163, 169, 177, 187, 189, 189n162, 196–197, 203, 215–217, 220, 228n110, 250–252
  lower-class, 25, 40, 56, 61, 154–155, 208
Clement of Alexandria, 3, 221, 245
conception (of children), 3, 6, 51, 67, 69, 72, 77, 83, 126, 173
conversion, 2, 7, 21, 24, 141, 144, 249, 156, 165, 166, 168–170, 175–176, 179, 187, 189, 195–197, 218–219, 229, 249
contraceptives, 61

discourse, 5–7, 20, 28, 33n111, 41
  childbearing discourse, 1–8, 29–31, 36, 41, 43–83, 85, 87, 91, 135, 137, 140, 150, 168–171, 177, 195–196, 249–250, 253
  see also childbearing

gender discourse, 6, 29–35, 59, 71, 91, 112, 118, 122–125, 132, 151, 229, 252–253
salvation discourse, 5, 92, 112, 143–147, 168, 195–196, 253
divorce, 22, 56, 98
dog, 45, 141–142, 191–194
dreams, 19, 201–202, 209, 224n89, 231

embryo, 51, 61, 70, 175
Emperor, Roman, 39–40, 43, 55, 58–59, 103, 160, 206, 210, 222, 239–240
Empire, Roman, 29–30, 39, 44, 54–59, 67, 92, 118, 151, 155, 164, 208, 219, 222, 228, 240, 243
ethnicity, 37–39, 39n143, 194
see also race
eucharist, 82, 245–246
Euclia, 25, 141, 158, 160–163, 165–168, 189–195, 197
Eve, 2–4, 8, 43–49, 101, 103, 123–128, 133–134, 148, 168, 177, 180–185, 187, 193, 196–197, 213, 249, 251, 254–255

father, fatherhood, 3, 16, 18, 39–40, 50, 56, 58–59, 97–98, 106–108, 110, 120, 126, 133–135, 153–154, 168, 172–173, 179, 203–204, 212, 216–217, 219–225, 229, 240, 252, 253
fecundity, 54–59, 62, 243
Felicitas, 2–4, 6, 8, 24, 189n162, 199–200, 203–208, 210, 213, 215, 224, 230–244, 247, 250–251, 254–255
femininity, 19, 27, 35, 189, 225, 228n111, 250, 253
see also womanhood
feminist research, feminist scholarship, 5, 7, 11–41
first-wave feminist approach, 12, 14, 15n21
second-wave feminist approach, 12–15, 22, 27
third-wave feminist approach, 7, 12–15, 19, 20n53, 22, 27, 36, 41
fertility, 5, 43, 45, 49, 59, 61, 72, 76
fetus, 6, 68, 70, 104, 169–171, 242
freedmen, 228
freedwomen, 30, 55–56
freeing slaves, *see* freedmen, freedwomen, manumission, slave

Galen, 67, 69–72, 130n160
gender (constructions), 5, 8, 9, 66, 96, 110, 143–144, 151, 208, 215, 252
gender-egalitarian, 14, 15, 18, 22
see also discourse
genre, 4, 8, 30–31, 41, 43–44, 57–58, 61, 66, 83, 85–87, 137–141, 199–203
gladiator, 109–110, 204, 206–207, 209, 212–213, 222–225, 227–229, 234, 239, 242, 243–244, 252
gynecology, 45, 66–76

Hippocratic writings, 45, 53–54, 66–75, 193
honor, 51–52, 54–55, 59, 110, 116, 158, 186, 189, 216, 226–227, 228n110, 229, 238–240, 251–252
household, 2, 8, 39–40, 43, 55, 57–58, 85, 89, 95–96, 106, 110–112, 131–135, 150, 150n54, 161, 167, 193, 216, 249
household codes, 23, 26n83, 98, 120, 134
household management, 49–51, 100, 102, 113, 130, 179
Household of God, 96–106, 111–112, 121, 249

ideology, 7, 28, 31, 58, 171, 175, 184–185, 225, 231, 234, 242, 247
oikos ideology, 8, 96, 98–100, 106, 109, 112, 115, 120–124, 131–135, 250, 253
intersectional, intersectionality, 7, 26–27, 36–41, 51, 134, 150, 156, 190, 196–197, 251
Iphidama, 141–142, 148, 162–163, 165–168, 189, 195, 197

Jezebel, 193–194

kyriarchal, 39–40, 51, 85, 95–96, 99, 106–107, 110–112, 119–122, 133, 155, 157, 252
see also patriarchal

labor, 6, 43, 53–54, 72–74, 80–81, 169–171, 204–208, 234, 237, 244
labor pain, 3, 4, 80–81, 143, 171, 213, 230, 232, 239, 250, 254
see also, birth, childbearing, parturition
lactation, 69, 242
see also breastfeed, milk, nurse
legitimate offspring, *see* children

magic, 67n134, 74, 152, 159
manhood, 151, 171
see also masculinity
manumission, 53
see also freedmen, freedwomen, slave

marriage, 6, 23–25, 43–44, 49–52, 56–59, 62–63, 102–103, 105, 132–134, 149, 162, 179, 187–189, 196, 218, 240
masculinity, 27, 34, 63–65, 91, 115, 133–135, 151–161, 189, 196–197, 220–222, 226–230, 234, 239–240, 247, 250–253
see also manhood
protocols of masculinity, 34–36, 41, 106–110, 153n61, 187, 220, 224–225
"become male", 8, 63–65, 79, 147, 173, 175, 177, 186–189, 196, 215, 222–223, 227–230, 251–253
matrona, 3, 8, 51–52, 56, 215–219, 240, 247
Maximilla, 2, 7, 8, 25, 137, 141–197, 225, 249–255
menstruation, 67–68
midwife, 3, 7, 54–55, 72, 74–76, 137, 152, 169–173, 186, 206–208, 241, 244
midwifery, 2, 55n58, 76, 152–153, 169–170, 176–177
milk, 61, 68, 75, 81, 104n75, 170, 203, 233, 236–237, 239, 244–247, 250
see also breastfeed, lacation, nurse
mother, 2, 3, 43, 51–52, 58–64, 78, 81–82, 104, 106, 111, 116, 121–122, 125, 133–135, 170–173, 191, 199, 207, 215–219, 232–233, 240, 244–248
motherhood, 3, 4, 6, 36, 59–60, 199, 208, 217, 241–243, 248, 250, 253

nurse, 61–62, 81, 176, 200n9, 217, 233, 243–245, 247
see also breastfeed, lacation, milk, wet-nurse

one-sex model, 33–34, 70–72, 252

paideia, 62, 81, 108, 133, 177
parturition, 43, 69, 73, 82, 173, 206–207
paterfamilias, 39–40, 55–56, 99, 106, 161, 219–220, 222, 240
pater patriae, 58, 222
paternity, 6, 52
patria potestas, 24, 56–57, 222
patriarchal, 5, 16–17, 21–24, 58, 82, 103, 134–135, 253
see also kyriarchal
patron, patronage, 59, 163–165, 189
Perpetua, 3, 8, 18–19, 22, 24, 26, 40, 64–65, 199–248, 250–255
Philo, 29, 47–48, 64, 74, 78–79, 116–118, 191, 202n20
Plato, 44n4, 64, 76–79, 153, 158
Platonic, Platonism, 7, 64, 139, 143, 146–148, 153, 157–158, 169, 171–177, 180, 191, 256
Plutarch, 57, 79–80, 116, 161, 164n102, 187–188, 217–218
postcolonial, 27, 36–37, 39n143
pregnancy, 6, 45, 60, 66–75, 76–80, 130, 171–173, 190–193, 204–207, 253
procreation, 1–5, 35–36, 45, 49–57, 62, 65, 100, 130, 172, 177, 179, 255
see also reproduction
prostitute, prostitution, 30, 53–54, 54n49, 74, 111, 116, 118, 154n67n, 227, 237

race, 27, 36–40, 147–148, 159
see also ethnicity
rebirth, 7, 78, 82, 93–94, 237n142, 245–246
reproduction, 6, 8, 27, 29, 41, 44–45, 53, 58, 72–76, 77–79, 172–177, 195, 223
see also procreation
resurrection, 3, 47, 63, 82, 90, 93, 143, 145, 150, 211–213, 242, 248

salvation, 1–9, 91–95, 112–135, 142–150, 168–197, 208–214, 241–248, 249–256
see also salvation discourse
Saturus, 201, 203–204, 209–212, 216, 218, 221n78, 222, 226, 231–232, 243, 246, 253
seed, 4, 8, 51, 54, 67, 72–73, 79–80, 173–177, 188, 196, 214–215, 243
see also semen
semen, 68–72, 215
see also seed
sexual intercourse, 7, 48, 73, 162, 171, 181–184, 187, 191, 196
sexuality, 2, 22, 32–38, 48, 52, 64, 70–72, 78–79, 105, 118–119, 149, 154–155, 177, 190–191, 194, 238
sexual renunciation, 2, 4, 21–22, 59–65, 89, 137, 141, 149–150, 168, 175, 189, 195–196, 218, 249–254
shame, 52–53, 56, 115–116, 122, 192, 218, 220, 223, 227, 237, 239–240, 255
slave, 3, 6, 8, 23–26, 35, 39–40, 50–55, 61, 74, 95–96, 98, 100–101, 106–107, 110–111, 120, 122, 133–135, 141–142, 150–160, 162–168, 174, 178, 187, 189–197, 203, 205–208, 228, 230–234, 240–241, 247, 249–253
freeing slaves, 167, 190, 195
see also freedmen, freedwomen, manumission
slavery, 6, 51–53, 94, 154n67, 195, 205

Soranus, 55, 60–61, 67–76, 102, 163, 169–171, 208, 237
soteriology, 1, 3, 5, 8, 88n16, 91, 93, 94, 134, 142, 143, 145
  gender-specific soteriology, 1, 133
speech, 102–105, 107–108, 115, 122–123, 141, 145, 149, 156, 159, 165–168, 180–182, 186–187, 206, 224–225, 233, 252

status, 6, 39–40, 48, 51, 117, 128n152, 154, 164–166, 170, 194, 205n26, 208, 216, 219, 226, 234–242
  see also class
Stratocles, 3, 7–8, 137, 141–144, 146, 148–149, 151–159, 165–178, 183, 186, 188–189, 191, 195–197, 249, 253, 255
Stoic, Stoicism, 93, 157

teknogonia, 50, 87–90, 102–106, 112–113, 118–119, 129–131, 255
Tertullian, 74, 191, 199–200, 207n28, 210–215, 235n138, 235n139, 241–242, 245n168, 254–255
Thecla, 3, 18, 23, 63, 148n44, 150, 245
trans-gender, 8, 245

univira, 57, 97–98, 102–103

virgin, 16, 22–24, 45, 62–65, 68, 78, 125, 126, 150n53, 182, 218, 223, 247
virginity, 3, 58, 62–65, 69, 78, 125–126, 195, 218
  see also chastity
virtue, 25, 35–36, 59, 60, 77, 79, 79n178, 88, 95, 100–106, 114–123, 129, 131–132, 157–158, 163, 165, 183, 186, 230, 240, 254

wet-nurse, 53, 61, 75–76, 111, 170, 217
  see also nurse
widow, 2, 16–18, 21–23, 57, 68, 89, 97–99, 101–105, 110, 112, 120, 122, 133–134, 152n59
wife, 25, 30, 39, 46, 48, 50, 52–53, 56–57, 61, 65–66, 79–80, 96, 98–99, 106, 110–111, 116, 120–121, 124, 133–134, 149, 159–165, 177–179, 186–188, 217–219, 234, 236, 240
womanhood, 38, 64
  see also femininity
womb, 3–4, 45, 67–71, 74, 79n178, 82, 104, 191n167, 239, 246